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THE
BATTLE OF HARLEM HEIGHTS

SEPTEMBER 16, 1776

READ BEFORE THE NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

FEBRUARY 5, 1878

WITH A PREFACE AND NOTES

BY

ERASTUS C. BENEDICT

PUBLISHED BY
A. S. BARNES & COMPANY
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PREFACE.

This little monograph came in this wise. My grandfather, Rev. Abner Benedict, was a chaplain in the army at the battles of Long Island, Harlem Heights and White Plains. In the traditions of the family, and in biographical and historical literature, the battle of September 16, 1776, was known as the Battle of Harlem Heights. Absence from New York prevented my being present at the very interesting and appropriate celebration of the centennial anniversary of that battle. When the printed volume of the proceedings, with Mr. Jay's excellent oration, was put in my hands, my surprise was expressed that the name Harlem Plains had been used instead of Harlem Heights. A remark was made in reply that the battle was fought on Harlem Plains, which surprised me still more. I immediately set about a search for the historical truth. The result of my inquiries is seen in the following paper, which was read before the New York Historical Society, as an attempt to ascertain the proper name and the actual place of the battle. This inquiry is quite immaterial except for the purpose of that historical accuracy which seems to me to be always important in questions of the early history of our revolutionary struggle.

Before my paper was completed, I was informed that Mr. Johnston was writing on the subject for the Long Island Historical Society, and supposing that he might have evidence which I had not seen, I invited him to give me an interview, which he kindly did, spending an evening with me at my house. I read to him the characteristic portions of my paper, as far as it was completed, and we conversed on the subject. His views differed from mine, as they did from the published accounts of all who had written before him. I derived not only pleasure, but profit, from the interview. After reading my paper

in the Society, Mr. John A. Stevens, who was at that time the Librarian of the Society, urged me to print it, and when I informed him that I could not at that time give it the necessary attention, he kindly offered to superintend the printing himself, which I declined, the manuscript not being in a condition for printing. I had also determined not to print before having an opportunity to see Mr. Johnston's volume. That volume proved to be a very valuable and interesting contribution to local revolutionary history. It did not, however, change my views. I then repeatedly invited Mr. Stevens to call on me and give me the benefit of his views. He always expressed his willingness to do so, but was prevented from coming. I then determined to wait till Mrs. Lamb's unique, excellent and popular history of the City of New York should be so far advanced as to embrace her account of the battle, knowing, as I did, that her views differed widely from mine. Soon after her account was published, I was informed that Mr. Stevens had in hand an article for the magazine of American History. I determined to wait for that also. The publication of that number of the magazine was unavoidably delayed till the 29th of May last, and by that time my paper was in large part printed.

That magazine article has rendered necessary a portion of this preface, and some notes which I have appended to my paper, which the reader is requested to look at. There are in the text a few alterations and some new facts which I thought would more properly appear in the text than in foot notes.

I had then before me the carefully prepared accounts of Mr. Dawson, Mr. Lossing, Mr. Jay, Mr. Johnston, Mrs. Lamb and Mr. Stevens, besides my own, no two of them agreeing, except Mrs. Lamb's and my own, which, to my surprise, proved to be coincident in many parts, both in substance and in language. That coincidence happened as follows: Soon after the celebration, in a conversation with Mrs. Lamb, I expressed my views of the evidence as afterwards set forth in my paper, from which she expressed a prompt, positive and earnest dissent. I then dropped the subject with her, and went on with my inquiries.

Several months afterwards Mrs. Lamb sent her secretary to

me with a message that she had not been present at the reading of my paper, and asking me to allow her to read it. I cheerfully handed it to the secretary. I did not hear from it again till sometime after my return from Europe, in the Autumn of 1879, when she informed me that the number of her history containing her account of the battle, was electrotyped and ready for the press. I did not read it till after it was delivered to the subscribers.

A remark was made to me after the reading of my paper, by one who had taken much interest in the centennial celebration, that my views would destroy the value of that celebration. No mistake could be greater. That celebration was in every respect a complete and admirable success, and for it we are indebted to Mr. Stevens. He suggested the celebration, and he was the master-spirit of the theory and of the arrangements by which it was carried forward with so much success. The place of that commemorative display was well chosen and appropriate—elevated, far-overlooking and central. Had the battle been then going on, Mr. Jay might have seen the smoke of battle as it rose wherever it was, and have almost heard the volleys and the cannon, mingling with the well deserved plaudits of his hearers. On his either hand would be the two commanders, at their headquarters, directing the movements. The objective point of both was the same, Harlem Heights, Howe to attack and Washington to defend—neither having a thought of Harlem Plains. It could be no one but Washington who sent out Knowlton, and Reed, and Leitch, and Putnam and Greene, on the Heights, and no one but Howe who sent off the Fifth British Regiment of Foot to trot three miles, double quick, to support and rescue Leslie, three miles away, and it could be no one but him who sent forward the 8,000 or 10,000 fresh British regulars, who were just coming over the Bloomingdale hills when Washington ordered our jubilant troops to be called in.

That Mr. Stevens and Mr. Jay should be mistaken in their judgment on some facts of locality and some movements, is neither important nor singular. A hundred years of decay and of the changes wrought by modern improvements, have impaired the force of evidence, which was always scrappy,

sketchy and scattered, and not so forcible before being collated and combined. Different minds would view it differently, some would give more weight to one thing and some to another, even if the whole testimony was before them, as it would not be. Much of it has been discovered since Mr. Jay's oration was delivered, and doubtless more will be discovered hereafter, during the quickened search of this centennial period. The whole subject is one of fair historical investigation, without feeling or prejudice or pride of opinion.

In referring to the evidence, I have inserted in the paper and in this preface, only verbatim extracts from each document and I have printed those extracts in italics, to give them a sharper outline and to make a more distinct and forcible, and at the same time more harmonious, presentation of the proofs. It should also be remarked that the references, Jay, 25, etc., are not to be understood as quoting Mr. Jay personally, but simply as a reference to the page of the Jay commemorative volume, the pages of that volume being numbered consecutively from the first to the last, including the appendix.

Mr. Stevens has gone awkwardly out of his way to throw discredit on the history of Mrs. Lamb, now nearly finished, and to say that I am justly chargeable with leading her into topographical and historical error, and to say this for no other probable reason than that I have been compelled to differ with him respectfully on a matter of revolutionary history which is somewhat dim with age, and on which all other writers on the subject have come to conclusions differing from his own and from each other.

He begins by suggesting that my view assumes that Washington "committed such a blunder as to have neglected to hold the southern extremity of the heights on which his army was encamped." The reverse is expressly stated in my account, and is true, that Washington held not only the southern extremity, but the whole of the Heights where his army was encamped. His strong pickets ran along the eastern brow of the Heights to the Point of Rocks, and along the northern brow of the Manhattanville hollow-way, to the North River. Immediately above them was the advanced guard of two brigades commanded by General Greene, and

above them lay the brigades of which Colonel Silliman's command was a part—vide page 24. Washington held the whole of the Heights two months.

I shall not now review all the errors of Mr. Stevens. I leave them to be compared with the proofs mentioned in my paper. His petty fault-finding manner is evidence that he may have been influenced by "private griefs" as much as by the love of historical truth. I must, however, mention a few characteristic instances to show how carelessly he makes his attack.

Mrs. Lamb says : *Washington saw large bodies of the enemy upon the high grounds opposite.* To this Mr. Stevens says :

There is no direct evidence to any appearance of large bodies anywhere. Let us see. Washington himself distinctly says : *About the time of the post's departure with my letter, the enemy appeared in several large bodies upon the plains, about 2½ miles from here.* (Date, Headquarters, Morris' House.) *I rode down to our advanced posts to put matters in a proper situation if they should attempt to come on, when I arrived there I heard a firing, which I was informed was between a party of our rangers, under the command of Colonel Knowlton, and an advanced party of the enemy.*—Jay, 40. He says again, in another letter : *On Monday morning last, several parties of the enemy appeared on the high grounds opposite to our heights, and some skirmishing had happened between our troops and those of the enemy.*—Jay, 41. Mr. Stevens thinks the second of these statements of Washington is correct—the other not ! They are the same statement—referring to the plains on the high grounds opposite—that is, Bloomingdale Heights.

Colonel Silliman (date, Harlem Heights, Sept. 17th) says : *Yesterday, at 7 o'clock in the morning, we were alarmed with the sight of a considerable number of the enemy on the plains between us, about a mile distant.*—Jay, 57. This fixes the time, 7 A.M.

Colonel Reed says : *Just after I had sealed my letter an account came that the enemy was advancing in three large columns.*—Jay, 47-49.

Colonel Humphrey says : *Next morning several parties of the enemy appeared upon the plains in our front. General Washington rode quickly for the outposts for the purpose of preparing for an attack if the enemy should come on.*—Life of Putnam,

140. The enemy did not come on till a little before 12 o'clock, several hours later.—Jay, 57.

Notwithstanding attempts which have been made to throw discredit on father Weems's story of the cherry tree and the hatchet, I think that with the testimony of these three officers, every one of them on the spot, and of the highest credibility, Mrs. Lamb had a right to consider Washington's character for veracity good.

Again, Mrs. Lamb says: *Before daylight Washington was in the saddle. His first important act was to send Knowlton with a picked company of 120 men to learn the position of and take the enemy's advanced guard.* Mr. Stevens says: *For this also there is no authority.* Let us see.

A letter from an officer in the army to his friend, published at the time in the Connecticut Gazette, says: *On Monday morning the General ordered us to go and take the enemy's advanced guard; accordingly, we set out just before day and found where they were.*—Jay, 60.

This officer is well understood to have been Captain Oliver Brown, Knowlton's senior captain, who was appointed by Washington to the command of the rangers on Knowlton's death.—Jay, 66. He was there in the battle, an officer of the 120 picked men. It was he who said *My poor Colonel (Knowlton) was shot just by my side. I took hold of him and asked him if he was badly wounded, he told me he was, and as his life ebbed away he said: "I do not value my life if we do but get the day;"* and it was he who ordered two of his men to carry the dying hero to the rear. It could be nobody but Captain Brown.—Jay, 60. He was a brave, patriotic and good man, recorded as distinguished at the battle of Harlem Heights, White Plains, Princeton, Trenton, Brandywine, Germantown and Monmouth. Better believe him, Mr. Stevens, as Mrs. Lamb does, and as I do. See his Epitaph in the Appendix, Note 4.

Mr. S. says, that the statement of Mrs. Lamb that this battle was evidently a part of the British plan to drive the Americans from the island *has no basis in contemporaneous history.*

Let us see.

General George Clinton says: *It is without doubt, they had out on the occasion between 4000 and 5000 of their choicest*

troops, and expected to have drove us off the island. They are greatly mortified at their disappointment.—Jay, 54.

A letter from headquarters to a gentleman in Annapolis, dated Sept. 17th says : *We expect every hour that the general engagement will come on.*—Jay, 62.

In general orders of the 16th, General Washington says: *General Nixon's and Colonel Sargeant's divison, Colonel Weedon's and Major Price's regiments, are to retire to their quarters to refresh themselves, but to hold themselves in readiness to turn out at a minute's warning. General McDougall to establish proper guards against his brigade upon the heights from Morris' House to General McDougall's camp, to furnish proper guards to prevent a surprise, not less than twenty men from each regiment. General Putnam commands upon the right flank to-night. General Spenceer, from McDougall's brigade, up to Morris House. Should the enemy attempt to force the pass to-night, General Putnam is to apply to General Spenceer for a reinforcement.*—Jay, 65. Baurmeister, 24th Sept., says: *The English Light Infantry advanced too quickly on the retreat of the enemy.*—Jay, 82.

General Sir Henry Clinton says: *The ungovernable impetuosity of the light troops drew us into this scrape.*—Jay, 81. *The light infantry who were the ran of our army pressed too gallantly upon the rebels.*—Jay, 80.

The complaint is clearly that they were premature—they attacked too soon.

It has been said that there is no evidence that at any time on the 16th, "a single Britisher succeeded in crossing or attempted to cross the Manhattanville Hollow-way." Let us see:

I suppose that Silliman's entrenchments across the Island were where they are placed by Mrs. Lamb, beginning about 153d street, near the bank of the Harlem River, and ending quite on the bank of the Hudson River, because there were no other entrenchments across the island to the river, and because Silliman says they took in three little redoubts which were there before, and are shown on the map. It is, however, for the present purpose quite immaterial whether they were there, or lower down, where two months later, Sauthier's map shows was another line of entrenchments beginning about half the distance from the Harlem River to the Hudson, and ending on the Hudson, apparently a stronger work than Silliman's.

Now, Colonel Silliman says: *About half a mile below us in the woods, we had two brigades lying as an advanced guard. The enemy in a large body advanced in the woods a little before 12 o'clock and began a heavy fire on those brigades.*—Jay, 57. General Greene commanded those brigades.

General Greene says in his letter to the Governor of Rhode Island—his State: “*On the 16th we had a skirmish at Harlem Heights. A party of about a thousand came and attacked our advanced post, and Putnam and Reed took part in that fight.*—Jay, 55. In another letter General Greene says: “*The enemy next day at Harlem Heights, flushed with the success of the day before, approached and attacked our lines where I had the honor to command,*” Jay, 66. “*General Putnam and the Adjutant-General were in the action, and behaved nobly.*”—Jay, 67.

I have carefully studied the various accounts of this battle, and now, after all that has been said, I am compelled to say that I have not seen any evidence that after the eight rounds apiece of the skirmish between Leslie and Knowlton in the early morning, there was a shot fired below the American pickets along the brow of the Manhattanville Hollow-way, so clearly and truly represented on Mr. Johnston's map “Field of the Harlem Heights affair,” at page 259 of his volume.

The opinions of the writers, that all the fighting was below those pickets and so within the British picket lines, are very clearly given, but they all fail to state the evidence on which they formed those opinions, which opinions seem quite inadmissible. Mr. Stevens seems to suppose that where the facts are inconsistent with his theory, so much the worse for the facts, and that what he so often calls “The fair inference,” “The natural inference,” “The presumptive evidence” of his theory must prevail over the written statements of officers of high character who were on the spot.

Of all the extraordinary statements of Mr. Stevens, the most extraordinary is this, that *there is not a shadow of authority for Mrs. Lamb's statement that Knowlton was discovered at sunrise and attacked by 400 of the British Infantry near Vandewater's Heights.*

In addition to the proofs quoted on pages 28 to 30, I invite

attention to the testimony of Hall's Civil War in America, which distinctly and significantly furnishes the missing link which connects the parts of this story, stating where Knowlton's camp was, the place from which the Rangers "set out" before daylight, and the place $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles distant where they were discovered and attacked by Leslie a little later in the morning. Hall says: *On the sixteenth in the morning, a body of the enemy (the Rangers) turned out of their lines on Morris Heights, and appeared * * near the edge of a wood in front of our left flank, on which two companies of Light Infantry (Leslie) were sent to dislodge them.*

Now it is quite immaterial what route Knowlton took when he "set out," or when he "came in" for re-inforcements. I must however insist that it is probable, as stated in my paper, page 27, that he went out by the low unobstructed shore of the river, out of sight and of hearing of both armies, and that he "came in" through the woods that covered the heights along the shore, pursued by Leslie, also in the woods.

The point of Mr. Stevens as to the barracks, I presume would not have been made by him were it not that he makes the basis of it a map which has no existence except in the garbled and "cooked" copy of a map substituted for and called the original Sauthier's map in the magazine article. What an idea to "cook" an old historical map into a made-dish and serve it as the original! The barracks built and burned by the Americans were the barracks near Fort Washington, burned by Colonel Lasher by the special order of General Heath. I invite attention to note 5 in the Appendix in which I make some remarks as to the maps and the barracks. At the time of the battle there were no barracks below Manhattanville—nor indeed anywhere else; it was warm weather, September 16th, and the two armies had arrived on these fields only the night before, and it is not easy to see how Sauthier's map, not made till after November 16th, when barracks were necessary, could furnish evidence that the Americans were fighting within the British lines and had barracks there two months before.

June 22, 1880.

E. C. BENEDICT.

THE
EVACUATION OF NEW YORK,
AND THE
BATTLE OF HARLEM HEIGHTS,
IN SEPTEMBER, 1776.

The Evacuation of the City of New York and the Battle of Harlem Heights, to which it led, are so nearly connected as to be one military event, and are so important as to deserve a more careful history than they have yet received. That battle was the first American victory of the Revolutionary War.

This Society, on the centennial anniversary of the day of the battle, celebrated so important an event in an appropriate manner under the mistaken name of the Battle of Harlem Plains. Assembled thousands, convened from this and other States, on the high grounds overlooking northward the battle-field and the camp grounds of the preceding night, listened to a patriotic and eloquent commemorative oration by Mr. Jay, our late Minister to Austria, which was published by the Society. In recommending the Society to celebrate the event, the Executive Committee very justly says: *The action, though of minor importance, was one of the most brilliant exploits of the Revolutionary War. In a close conflict, the most celebrated of the British regiments, after an unsuccessful effort to break the American lines, were repulsed and driven back in confusion*

by the Continental troops. This success restored confidence to the patriot forces, demoralized by the retreat from Long Island and the subsequent landing at Kips Bay.—Jay, 86. There was no large and general plan of attack, and at the end of the day each army kept the positions which it had before the attack was made (Jay, 52-76) ; and in the number of casualties, the battle was indeed of minor importance, but in historical results the affair was as important as it was brilliant, and was so esteemed at the time.

It is the object of this paper to contribute some general views and some historical details which have hitherto escaped proper notice, and which serve to correct some statements, now shown by this further evidence to be erroneous. The chief of those errors are in regard to the proper historical name of the battle and the place where it was actually fought, both of which are important to the truth of history and to its commemorations. Before considering the evidence in detail, some general views, which seem to me to have much weight, will be presented.

THE MORAL EFFECT OF THE BATTLE

upon the two armies was very striking and very important.

The British were convinced that they had been in an unfortunate *scrape*. In a manuscript note by Sir Henry Clinton, in his copy of Stedman's History of the American War, he says: *The ungovernable impetuosity of the light troops drew us into this scrape*.—Jay, 81.

In the British order book of the next morning the Commander-in-Chief *disapproves the conduct of the Light Company in pursuing the rebels without proper discretion and without support*.—Jay, 77. Lieut. Harris, of the Fifth British Foot, a part of the British reserve (Jay, 77), says: *We were instantly trotted about three miles, without a halt to draw breath, to support a battalion of Light Infantry which had imprudently advanced so far without support as to be in danger of being cut off. This must have happened but for our haste*.—Jay, 79. The Hessian General Donop says: *General Leslie had made a great blunder in sending these brave fellows so far in advance in the woods without support*.—Jay, 82. General Howe found it necessary to *recommend the corps under the command of General Leslie to be not only brave but more*

prudent.—Jay, 83. General George Clinton says of the enemy: *They are greatly mortified at their disappointment, and have ever since been exceedingly modest and quiet, not having even patrolling parties beyond their lines. I lay within a mile of them the night after the battle, and never heard men work harder. I believe that they thought we intended to pursue our advantage and attack them next morning.*—Jay, 54–55. The brave Captain Gooch, writing to a Boston merchant, says: *The great superiority of numbers, and every other advantage the enemy had, when considered, makes the victory glorious, and though but over a part of their army, yet the consequences of it are attended with advantages very great, as they immediately quitted the heights all round us, and have not been troublesome since.*—Jay, 60. Colonel Lamb was at this time confined in a British prison ship. After his release he told Dr. Stiles that an officer came on board on Lords-day evening (15 September), *damning the Yankees for runaway cowards, and storming that there was no chance to fight and get honor and rise. He was in the Monday action also, and came again on board in the evening, cursing and damning the war, saying he had found the Americans would fight, and that it would be impossible to conquer them.*—Jay, 69. Lewis Morris, Jr., writes to his father: *The impression it made upon the minds of our people is a most signal victory to us, and the defeat a considerable mortification to them.*—Jay, 56. Colonel Silliman says: *Our people drove the regulars back from post to post about a mile and a half, and then left them pretty well satisfied with their dinner. Since which they have been very quiet. They have found now that when we meet them on equal ground we are not a lot of people that will run from them, but that they have now had a pretty good drubbing.*—Jay, 57. A British officer, in a letter from New York, dated September 23d, a week after the battle, says: *I am pretty confident our General will not attack them in their advantageous situation with musquetry. He seems determined to make no improper sacrifices. We have a noble train of artillery.*—Upcott Collection. Sir William Howe, says Colonel Humphrey, *not choosing to put too much at risk in attacking us in front, on the 12th of October, moved to Frog's Neck.*—Humphrey's Life of Putnam, 144. The British were humiliated.

On the other hand, the Americans were overjoyed with their

success. It was our first victory in the war. Colonel Humphrey says: *An advantage so trivial in itself, produced, in event, a most surprising and almost incredible effect upon the whole army. Among the troops not engaged, who, during the action, were throwing earth from the new trenches with an alacrity that indicated a determination to defend them, every visage was seen to lighten and to assume, instead of the gloom of despair, the glow of animation.*—Humphrey, 142-3.

Major Fish wrote to Mr. McKesson, the Secretary of the Convention:

Our troops were in a most desponding condition before, but now are in good spirits.—Jay, 59. Lewis Morris Jr. says: *Our people consider it a most signal victory to us.*—Jay, 56. George Clinton writes to the New York Convention: *It has animated our troops, given them new spirits and erased every bad impression the retreat from Long Island, &c., had left upon their minds,—they find they are able with inferior numbers to drive their enemy, and think of nothing now but conquest.*—Jay, 52. Adjutant-General Reed says: *I assure you it has given another face of things in our army. You can hardly conceive the change it made in our army. It has given spirits to our men. The men have recovered their spirits, and feel a confidence which before they had quite lost.* General Washington says: *Our army seems to be greatly inspired by it.*—Jay, 45. *This little advantage has inspired our troops prodigiously.*—Jay, 43. All seem to concur in the opinion that it was the result of the true character of our troops as patriotic and brave officers and men. *Never did troops go to the field with more cheerfulness and alacrity,* says an officer of the Maryland Regulars.—Jay, 61. It also destroyed the prestige of the British soldiers. *They find,* says Washington, *that it only requires resolution and good officers to make an enemy (that they stood in too much dread of) give way.*—Jay, 43. General George Clinton says: *They find they are able with inferior numbers to drive their enemy.*—Jay, 52. Colonel Silliman says: *They have found now that when we meet them on equal ground we are not a set of people that will run from them, but they have now had a pretty good drubbing.*—Jay, 57. General Knox says: *They (the Americans) find that if they stick to these mighty men, they will run as fast as other people.*—Jay, 51.

Captain Gooch says: *I'm now ready to give them the second part whenever they have an appetite, as I'm convinced whenever they stir from their ships we shall drub them.*—Jay, 60. This self-reliance acquired in this battle went with our troops through the war, and it is here presented before examining the evidence, because it cannot fail to have an important influence in giving force to the evidence.

After the retreat from Long Island came rest, reflection and forecast, till the plans of the commanders of the two armies were formed. Then came the evacuation of the City and the retreat to Harlem Heights and the battle there, which entirely deranged the plans of Lord Howe and changed the plans of both armies. The plans of the British for northward and eastward conquest were then suspended and were never accomplished. The military events of the 15th and 16th days of September doubtless mainly produced that result.

THERE WERE TWO ENGAGEMENTS.

What is called by Major Gardner *the affair of Harlem Heights* was made up of two separate engagements, distant from each other in time and place. The first—a skirmish—commenced in the morning, about daybreak, and the Americans, although fighting bravely, were compelled to retreat back to their camp for support, hotly pursued by the enemy. The second—the grand battle of the day—began about eleven in the forenoon.—Jay, 57. In this the Americans were completely successful in four hours of continued fighting, driving the enemy from post to post till three P.M., when General Washington ordered them to give over the pursuit and to return to their camps.—Jay, 48. This fact of two actions, both of which were attacks by the British, is exceedingly important in analyzing the evidence, and properly applying its parts respectively to the events and positions of the day and the field.

THE AMOUNT AND CHARACTER OF THE FORCES

engaged deserve particular consideration. There is no room for doubt as to the forces engaged in the skirmish, or first engagement, at early dawn. On the side of the British was a battalion of British Light Infantry, which was the van of

the British army (Jay, 80), about 400 in number, under General Leslie; and the Americans had 120 picked men, under Lieutenant-Colonel Knowlton, whose command was known as *the Rangers*.

The number of troops engaged in the second action, which is more properly called *the Battle*, is important. Some officer—in every detachment engaged—mentions what troops of which he was part were in the battle. These are the details on the American side.

Col. Knowlton's men (Jay, 60).....	120
Major Leitch's men—three companies Virginia Rifles (Jay, 44-63)	say 120
Col. Griffith's and Col. Richardson's Maryland Regi- ments and some detachments of Eastern troops (Jay, 45)	say 500
Major Mantz' three companies of Rifles (Jay, 63) ...	say 120
Remainder of that brigade (Jay, 61)	say 500
Weedon's Virginia regiment, Price's three independent companies Maryland troops, three other companies Maryland Flying Camp, a battalion of Virginians, and some Northern troops (Jay, 63)	say 800
One regiment of Rhode Islanders (Jay, 61).....	say 350
Massachusetts Brigade, including Crary's Volunteers (Jay, 59)	900
American advanced guard, two brigades (Jay, 57)...	say 1500
	4910

These are estimated at the lowest figures, and amount to 4910 men.

There were several field pieces on each side.—Jay, 52-54. Lieutenant Heinrichs, of Donop's Yagers, who was in the battle, and was wounded about one o'clock, says the American force engaged was 4000 strong.—Jay, 83. Baurmeister says the same.—Jay, 82. Stewart speaks of one attack by 3000 men.—Jay, 78. General Howe also says his reserve was attacked by nearly three thousand men.—Jay, 77. The above estimate is clearly within bounds.

We have not the same details of the British forces engaged.

They are usually spoken of as superior to ours in numbers. General George Clinton, speaking with caution and correcting his original estimate, says : *I did not think so many men were engaged ; it is without doubt, however, they had out on the occasion between four and five thousand of their choicest troops, and expected to have drove us off the Island.*—Jay, 51. *Besides these there were about 8,000 or 10,000 concealed behind the hill.*—Jay, 62. On a review of the situation and of the day, General Clinton, on our side, and Major Baurmeister, of the Germans, and other officers on both sides, evidently believed that this battle was to have been but a continuation of the pursuit of the day before, and was intended to drive the Americans off the Island. With us, it was unexpected, *extempore*, and defensive. With them, it was part of their purpose to take the Americans unprepared, and to get possession of the northern passes to the interior and to the East. Washington's general orders of that day, after the battle, show clearly that he expected the British attack to be renewed.—Jay, 65. A Maryland officer writes on the next day : *We expect every hour that the general engagement will come on.*—Jay, 62.

Up to this time the British Regulars had maintained their great historic character of invincibility. At Bunker Hill, at Long Island, and at Kips Bay, their record was unbroken. It is hardly to be believed, the character, policy, and position of Washington being considered, and his then remarkable feeling of discouragement, that he threw half his effective force more than a mile from the strong position of Harlem Heights into the face of a fresh and victorious army of British Regulars, ten to twelve thousand strong, with no hope, in case of retreat, but surrender or slaughter in the narrow Manhattanville pass, with its rocky and precipitous sides. Washington evidently did not intend to attack ; he thought only of defence.

THE MORNING ATTACK OF THE BRITISH LIGHT INFANTRY.

Another view. Stedman says, and so was the fact: *The action was carried on by reinforcements on both sides. The enemy (the Americans), however, possessed a great advantage from the circumstance of engaging within half a mile of their entrenched camp, whence they could be supplied with fresh troops as often as*

occasion required.—Jay, 80. At the time of this battle the Americans had no entrenched camp below 161st street. The main body of the army was at Morris Heights and there the camp of the Rangers must have been. Half a mile below that, would be at about 151st street, between which and Manhattanville the main and final action must have been fought.

The British General, Sir Henry Clinton, made a note in his own handwriting to this paragraph in a copy of Stedman's History: *It was the ungovernable impetuosity of the Light troops that drew us into this scrape.*—Jay, 81. Scrape indeed it was! The scrape would have been on the other side, however, if the fight with the Light troops had been on Bloomingdale Heights where Knowlton's force that encountered them would have been in the jaws of death. But what was "the scrape," that the impetuosity of the Light troops led the British into? Major Shaw, writing to his father, September 18, says: *The day before yesterday, a part of them attempted to force a passage through some woods, and to take possession of a number of heights, but were repulsed with loss, by an equal, if not inferior body of our troops, who behaved with as much bravery as men possibly could.*—Jay, 64. *The Light Infantry who are the ran of our army, pressed too gallantly upon a very superior body of the rebels, and drove them off.*—Jay, 80. It frustrated the plans of the British officers for the new pursuit of that day. It began the battle prematurely, before they were ready, and in the wrong place too—in the upper part of Harlem Heights, where they could not be supported in time to prevent the Americans from beginning to drive the British, and, by the momentum and prestige of victory, keeping them going till they were driven off Harlem Heights, back to their own lines.

What had the Light troops done? Lieutenant Harris, of the fifth Foot, says: *They had imprudently advanced so far without support, as to be in great danger of being cut off. This must have happened but for our haste.*—Jay, 79. *They were engaged in a wood.*—Jay, 78. They were advanced so far that the support was instantly trotted about three miles (without a halt to draw breath), to support them.—Jay, 79. Colonel Donop, with his Yagers, was also ordered to move up to support Leslie (Jay, 81), and he moved up with his Yagers, and

the Grenadier battalion of Linsingen. He says: *But for my Yagers, two regiments of Highlanders and the British Light Infantry would have all, perhaps, been captured, for they were attacked by a force four times their number, and General Leslie had made a great blunder in sending those brave fellows so far in advance in the woods without support.*—Jay, 82. And Major Baurmeister says: *The English Light Infantry advanced too quickly on the retreat of the enemy, and if the Grenadiers, and especially the Hessian Yagers, had not arrived in time to help them, none of those brave Light Infantry would have escaped.*—Jay, 82.

DISCREPANCY IN RECENT ACCOUNTS.

There is a remarkable difference as to the place and course of this battle in the various accounts of it, given by recent historical writers of respectability, no two of them agreeing.

One supposes the battle to have begun about 124th street, between 10th and 11th avenues, and to have passed over the Lunatic Asylum grounds to 8th avenue and 109th street. Another supposes the battle to have begun about 5th avenue and 110th street, where the Americans fell back towards their camp, till re-enforced, when they drove the British back across the plains to the woods, on the hills now included in the northern portion of the Central Park, the fighting being principally on the Harlem Plains, which he seems to have supposed justified him in calling it the battle of Harlem Plains. Another supposes the battle to have commenced near the southern extremity of the Bloomingdale ridge, whence the Americans retreated to the northernmost end of that ridge, to a gully or ravine between 10th and 11th avenues, at what he supposes was Matje David's Fly, where the fighting again began and moved onwards to the line of 118th street, east of the asylum grounds, which he supposes was the field of the principal battle.

Since this paper was read before the Society, Mr. Johnston's "Campaign round New York in 1776," has been published. He places the whole battle below Manhattanville, beginning at 123d street and 9th avenue, and ending between 105th and 110th street and 11th and 12th avenues, on the banks of the

Hudson River.—Johnston, 258, 98, map. All these positions seem to me to be quite unsupported by proof, and such remarkable discrepancy should be reviewed and revised, in the interests of historical accuracy.

As an appendix to Mr. Jay's oration, Mr. Kelby, the Assistant Librarian of the Society, has sought out and for the first time published together contemporaneous written evidence in regard to these events from thirty-six American, eight British and five Hessian pens, written while the facts were recent, by men who participated in the events which they describe. In collecting and comparing them, we are constantly reminded of the importance of preserving every piece of evidence in relation to the revolutionary period. The smallest scrap of paper which, by itself, seems to have no significance or value, is sometimes found to contain the missing link which unites great and important chains of events. Such positive written, contemporary testimony, by all the laws of evidence, is held to outweigh the gossip of hearsay and tradition, and the assumptions of more recent date which lack written evidence.

In studying these proofs we must remember that the operations were quite extempore and occupied much time, and extended over a large field of broken and irregular character, made up of forests, and woods, and rocks, and precipices and heights, and that the writers were some in one place and some in another, and all were absorbed in the stirring events of the fight where they were respectively engaged.

It would be strange, indeed, if we could not evolve a correct and true history from such materials. By first ascertaining such facts and localities as are certain, we never fail to show other facts and constructions to be necessary and therefore certain. These again influence others, till finally, as in putting together the parts of a dissected map, seeming incompatibilities vanish and the whole becomes certain and harmonious. It is, however, necessary always to remember that estimates of time and distance, in the midst of excitement and hurry, are so flexible and uncertain, that they may properly be so modified as to conform to facts that are certain, to localities that are fixed and to combinations that are necessary.

THE HISTORICAL NAME OF THE BATTLE.

As I shall speak of it as the battle of Harlem Heights, it is fitting that I should show that to be its proper historical name, for that too has its influence in studying this evidence and giving its parts their true significance. For if the battle was at the time known as the battle of Harlem Heights, it would require very strong evidence to show that it was fought in either of these four places, no one of which was in the vicinity of Harlem Heights, nor could with any propriety be called Harlem Heights.

There are very few original historians of unclassified details who, on a careful review of what they have first written, have not been glad of an opportunity to correct some errors of their first impressions. In historical inquiries, there should be no place for pride of preconceived opinion, nor for prejudices formed from investigations which were necessarily one-sided, and may have been made too hastily. Inquiry will, at last, bring out that historical accuracy which all should desire.

This battle was known in history, as the *Battle of Harlem Heights* (occasionally as the Battle of Harlem), and by no other name for three-quarters of a century after it was fought. Our whole army went to Harlem Heights as a strong place to be defended. *Encamping on the heights southwest of Colonel Morris', where they intended to form lines and make our grand stand.*—Jay, 51. They did so, and held it for two months. Harlem Plains, at the time of this battle, consisted of cultivated fields, bearing harvests, which were still there more than two weeks after the battle, when our army attempted to appropriate them as forage. One of our officers says in a letter, dated October 3, seventeen days after this battle: *These plains would afford an excellent field for a fight.*—Jay, 70.

Perhaps, no general officers of the army were more carefully correct in their military statements than General Greene and General Heath. An entry in General Heath's journal on the day of the battle, says it happened *on the heights west of Harlem Plains and south of Morris' House.*—Jay, 73. The western boundary of Harlem Plains, was about along the Ninth avenue, from Morris' House to 110th street, and any portion of

those heights along that western boundary, might be described as *west of Harlem Plains*, but certainly, not as part of Harlem Plains, and below Manhattanville, it would not be described as *south of Morris' House*.

General Greene, in a letter to the Governor of Rhode Island, under date of the 17th, the day after the battle, (he and Putnam commanded the American forces after the fall of Knowlton and Leitch), says: *On the 16th, we had a skirmish at Harlem Heights, a party of about 1,000 came and attacked our advance post. * * * The fire continued about an hour, and the enemy retreated. Our people pursued them, and by the splendid conduct of General Putnam and Colonel Reed, the Adjutant-General, our people advanced upon the plain ground without cover, and attacked them and drove them back.*—Jay, 55. On the 4th of October, the same careful and correct officer says: *The enemy next day, (16th) at Harlem Heights, flushed with the success of the day before, approached and attacked our lines, where I had the honor to command, (Jay, 66) ; at the advance post, half a mile below Colonel Silliman's entrenching brigades.*—Jay, 57. *The action, or rather skirmish, lasted about two hours. Our people beat the enemy off the ground*—Jay, 66. *General Putnam and the Adjutant-General were in the action, and behaved nobly.*—Jay, 67.

Colonel Knowlton is recorded in the biographical history of the country as a brave officer, who lost his life in the Battle of Harlem Heights.

Drake says of him: *At the Battle of Harlem Heights, while exhibiting his usual intrepidity, he fell.* Major Gardner, in the history of the Uniforms of the American Army, calls it *the affair of Harlem Heights*.—1st Mag. Am. His., 70. Spafford, in the first edition of his Gazetteer, 1813, p. 86, says: *Harlem Heights will long be remembered by Americans associated with important events of the Revolutionary War, as well as Fort Washington.*

Mr. Dawson, in his paper read before this Society and published, calls it *the Battle of Harlem Heights*, and makes that the title of his paper. Mr. Lossing, in his Table of Battles of the Revolution, mentions the *Battle of Harlem Heights*. Mr. Johnston, in his Campaign round New York, gives the battle the

name of the *Battle of Harlem Heights*. The epitaph of Captain Oliver Brown, of the Massachusetts line, states that he bore a conspicuous part *at the battles of Harlem Heights, White Plains, &c.*—Mag. Am. Hist., June, 1879, p. 376. I have not seen any evidence that there was any fighting, much less any battle on Harlem Plains. There could hardly be a greater misnomer than to call Bloomingdale Heights Harlem Plains.

I confess to a great respect and affection for those names of the revolutionary period which have passed into history, and have become, as it were, classical and memorial names, and I therefore use the old, true and descriptive name, *Harlem Heights*.

THE TOPOGRAPHY OF THE ISLAND OF NEW YORK

forms so important a portion of the evidence, that I shall give a brief description of it, using, however, such names of localities and landmarks as are familiar to us, since change and the progress of improvement have modified the landscape.

The Roads.—The Island above the City was intersected lengthwise by three great thoroughfares. *First, the Eastern or Old Road*, was the grand highway through the Island. It made its way from Broadway at the Park, up what are now Chatham street, the Bowery and the general line of Third avenue, till bearing West of the Fifth avenue by a crooked way through McGowan's Pass, it crossed Harlem Bridge. It was sometimes called the Old Post Road and the Old Boston Road. It led to New England. *Second. The Bloomingdale Road*, which was a continuation of Broadway, leading off to the westward from Madison Square, and pursuing the line of the present Broadway, along the course of the Hudson River, nearer or more remotely, through a changing region of low hills and winding vales towards the valley which is now called Manhattanville. The region in its whole breadth quite up to Manhattanville, was known by the beautiful descriptive name of Bloomingdale, which gave its name to the road. It was sometimes called the Kingsbridge road.

This road, as a legal highway, terminated at Adrian Hoogland's house, near the river, at about 115th street. It was continued as a farm-road through his farm. It, however, was

connected, near Hoogland's, by another public road, nearly at right angles with the Kingsbridge road, and with it passed over Harlem Heights to Kingsbridge.

The *Middle Road* started from Broadway and led up the Fifth avenue, and between the Fifth and Sixth avenues to and through McGowan's Pass, where it also joined the Kingsbridge Road and the Old Post Road.

On the most eastern of these roads, the Old Boston Road, there were milestones from which localities and distances were described and measured from the City Hall, afterwards called Federal Hall, in Wall street. The distances are now measured from the present City Hall. The 8th milestone was at 125th street, on the Old Post Road, north of the village of Harlem. These great thoroughfares were intersected and connected at different angles by local roads from one side of the Island towards the other, and by farm-roads and lanes for agricultural convenience.

Harlem.—The township of Harlem embraced all the Island of New York north of a line from the southern point of Harlem Cove, at Matje David's Fly, to the western channel of the East River near 76th street. The village of Harlem was then a small village at about the junction of Second and Third avenues and 123d and 125th street on the shore of Harlem River, on the margin of Harlem Plains. Harlem Plains was an alluvial flat which extended from the shore of Harlem River southwardly and westwardly to the high grounds which swept in a sort of crescent from Morris' house, at 161st street, to near the East River at about 90th street.

The Heights.—The surface of the Island rose at intervals to considerable elevations, which were known under the general designation of Heights. Such were the *Heights of Inclenberg*, now Murray Hill, the highest point, at 41st street and Fifth avenue, being 88 feet above tide.

Observatory Place.—The highest point being at 89th street and Fifth avenue, 108 feet above tide.

Bloomingdale Heights, extending along the river from about 112th street to Manhattanville, the highest point being at Hoogland's Hill, about at 125th street and Twelfth avenue, 173 feet above tide.—Cozzen's Geological Map. And

Harlem Heights, extending from Manhattanville to near Kingsbridge, rising at the highest point near Fort Washington to 271 feet above tide.

The most southerly point of Harlem Heights was known as the *Point of Rocks*. It was at about 127th street and Ninth avenue. Between the *Point of Rocks* and Kingsbridge were several heights among which was Morris Heights, about 250 feet above tide at 161st street, where were Washington's headquarters and his first entrenchments.

While the region of Bloomingdale was a pleasantly wooded rolling country of charming landscape, well deserving its beautiful name, Harlem Heights was of a very different character, a wild, rough, rocky and precipitous region, extending from Manhattanville to Kingsbridge. I here borrow the fine description of Mr. DeLancey, read before this Society: *It rose from the Hudson and Harlem Rivers in rocky, forest clad precipices, nearly a hundred feet in height, which, for well nigh three-fourths of its circumference, were almost inaccessible. These natural buttresses, support an irregular plain, the surface of which rises towards the centre, to an eminence two hundred feet above the Hudson River, and to another on the side of the Harlem River of about equal height, between which lies the most level part of the entire region.*—2d Mag. Am. Hist., 67.

This is the *plain* on the Harlem Heights, as the plains of Abraham are on the Heights of Quebec. This plain was interspersed with rocks which cropped out in ledges and ridges, and it contained higher heights and smaller hills. The sides and tops of these heights toward the Hudson River were thickly wooded, and known as *The Woods*.

Between these hills and down the sides of these heights, were smaller valleys with little rivulets leading down to the river, and terminating in the small plains or dales which constituted its low marginal shore at the base of the heights. This part of the island was a natural fortress, and for that reason, was chosen by Washington as the place *where he intended to form lines and make our grand stand on the defensive* (Jay, 51), the ground being naturally strong and easy to be strengthened by fortifications. General Heath, with his division, was engaged fortifying his position at Kingsbridge.

Below his lines, there were at the time of the battle, no intrenchments except some beginnings of a few days' work at about 161st street, and two or three redoubts between 153d street toward the North river and 158th street on Harlem river. With only such exceptions, these naturally fortified Harlem Heights lay, distinguished from their primeval condition only by the buildings, farms, fields and fences of the few inhabitants sparsely scattered along the roads. The whole island between Kingsbridge and Canal street, was a purely agricultural region, with farms, and orchards, and wheat, and buckwheat fields, with a large proportion of woods and forests.

MATJE DAVID'S FLY, OR VLY.

Hostilities began very early in the morning of the 16th, by a skirmish *near the point of Matje David's Fly*.—*July, 54.* That point is the key to the localities of the battle.

For more than 100 years before that time, that was a well-known landmark, referred to in patents, deeds, surveys and Acts of the Legislature, and laid down with precision by actual survey at the waterside, at the base of high grounds which declined towards the Hudson river. It was a meadow, on the marginal shore of the Hudson river, on the southside of Harlem Cove, *not a marshy streamlet which rose in the plain and emptied its waters into the East river.* Fly is a contraction of the Dutch word, *valei*, meadow.

In the two Nichol's patents of May and October, 1668, and in the Dongan patent of March, 1686, it is called *The Round Meadow near or adjoining to the Hudson's river.*

In the report of the State Commissioners for fixing the Harlem line, May 30th, 1774, the line is laid down *as beginning on the east side of the Hudson river, on the south side of the bay, lying before a certain piece of meadow commonly known by the name of the Round Meadow or Matje David's Fly.* In the Act of the Legislature of April, 1775, the line is adopted in the same words, *as surveyed by Francis Murschalk in the presence of the Commissioners.* Adrian Hoogland's farm lay along the river bank from about 107th street to the Harlem line, at Matje David's Fly. His executors conveyed it to Nicholas Depeyster in 1774, describing it as *beginning on the east side of the Hudson*

river, at a place commonly called *Matje David's Fly*, and running thence near a due south course, somewhat easterly, as the fence now stands, about 31 chains, then (around the farm to 107th street, by a great number of courses) to the banks of the Hudson river, then along the said river to *Matje David's Fly*, the place of beginning on the river bank at Manhattanville.

There was then a new road laid out in 1774-5, by law, from the Kingsbridge road, near the Point of Rocks, to the Fly continuing the Harlem Lane to the Hudson river side, where at the time of this battle, it probably connected with the farm-road through Adrian Hoogland's farm to his house at about 115th street, where it connected with the Bloomingdale road, of which it was probably made a continuation at a later period when that road was extended to the Kingsbridge road at Bradhurst's place. This new road is probably referred to by Washington in his letter to Heath, dated August 22d, 1776, where he says : *There is a road out of Harlem flat lands, that leads up to the hills, &c.*

Between 106th and 123d streets, were the high grounds of the Vandewater and Hoogland farms, originally one farm, being sometimes called Vandewater Heights and Hoogland Heights, extending up to *Matje David's Fly*. Hoogland Heights were separated from Harlem Heights by a valley descending from the 11th avenue to the Hudson river on one side, and to the 8th avenue on the other. The high grounds each side of it, were about 300 to 400 yards apart, and commanded large panoramic views. It was often called a hollow way. There were other such valleys. The valley of Canal street was one, Clendenning valley, running from about 100th street and 8th avenue to Striker's Bay, was another. There was another at about 154th to 158th street, through which a stream made of several small streams, found its way in a winding descent, and emptied into the river about the Audubon Park at 155th and 156th streets, draining the water shed west of 10th avenue, and there were others further up. At the base of the wooded heights along the shore was a narrow marginal level shore, made by the wash and débris of the hillsides and valleys, from a few feet to a few rods wide. At *Matje David's Fly*, the

Fly or meadow on the shore was in a round form, and took the name of the Round Meadow. It was several acres in extent. There was a Matje David, a member of the Dutch Church, in 1686, from whom, probably, the Fly took its name, as her property.

THE EVACUATION OF THE CITY,

was a necessary consequence of the retreat from Long Island. General Washington, in a letter to Patrick Henry, Governor of Virginia, says: *Our retreat from Long Island under the peculiar circumstances we then labored, became an act of prudence and necessity, and the evacuation of New York was a consequence resulting from the other.* It was a military necessity. For some days before the evacuation the American Army was on New York Island in three divisions; the right under Putnam with five brigades held the city; the centre under Spencer and Greene, with six brigades, was at Stuyvesant's Cove, Kip's Bay, Turtle Bay and Horen's Hook, and the left consisted of two brigades, and was at Kingsbridge, under Heath. The British Army was on Long Island, hovering over the city, and a fleet of British ships of war was in the harbor. A council of officers, on the 12th September, determined to abandon the city. Spencer and Greene, with their brigades then along the East river, were ordered to Harlem Heights, and Putman was ordered to evacuate the city, and to join them on the Heights, where the Americans *intended to form lines, and to make our grand stand.*—Jay, 51.

On the 4th of September, the British evacuated Blackwell's Island and the other Islands, and the Americans immediately occupied Blackwell's Island in force, and so strongly that the British outposts, on the main shore of Long Island, were exposed to a continual fire which their great battery at Hallett's Point could not silence. On the 8th, after a desperate attack and a wholly unexpected and obstinate resistance, the English dislodged the Americans from all the Islands.—1 Mag. Am. Hist., 35.

Washington had directed lines of light breastworks to be hastily thrown up along the shore at Kip's Bay. They were

manned by a brigade of new levies, and commanded by only a State Brigadier. It would be difficult to perceive why such fortifications, with such a force, were thus placed, were it not quite certain that Washington had no thought that the British intended to land at that place.

The object of Howe, however, was to land first at Kip's Bay a sufficient force to cut off Putnam's retreat, and afterwards to take possession of Harlem Heights. The escape of Putnam to Harlem Heights, by strengthening the force on the heights, deranged the plans of Howe, and prevented his occupying the heights, below Heath. The battle of Harlem Heights, unexpected and decisive, induced him soon to throw his forces into Westchester County, with a view to cut off Heath from the mainland, capture his position, and thus secure a pre-emptive right to the passes of the Highlands, to the interior of this State, and to the Eastern States, and possibly to end the war by capturing the army under Washington.

THE CANNONADING AT KIP'S BAY, AND THE LANDING OF THE BRITISH TROOPS.

On the morning of Sunday, the 15th, the cannonading by the British ships gave notice of their intention to land on the Island of New York, and Putnam immediately commenced his hurried retreat to unite with the forces under Washington, at Harlem Heights. He was accompanied and encumbered by many citizens, with their baggage. The retreat was covered by Colonel Sargeant's Brigade, forming the rear of the retreating column. This retreat was covered by Colonel Smallwood's regiment, of Maryland Regulars, stationed on the high ground by McGowan's Pass, having that pass in their rear.—Jay, 76.

The British General had given indications of landing at Stuyvesant's Cove, at Turtle Bay, at Horen's Hook, at Harlem, at Morrisania, and upon the Hellgate Islands, with a view to weaken the Americans by distracting their attention, dividing their forces, and misleading them. Major Baummeister, of the German troops, says: *This morning, 15th, at 7 o'clock, the man-of-war "Renommée," of 40 guns, sailed out of the fleet with*

two frigates, the "*Repulse*" and "*Pearl*," each of 32 guns, up the North River, and anchored above Bloomingdale. The vessels, on sailing by, fired whole broadsides on the shore of the City of New York, on account of which the City, with Fort Bunker Hill, was deserted by the Americans. I Mag. Am. Hist. 37, Howe says: this was done to draw the enemy's attention on that side, and the first division of troops, consisting of the Eighth Infantry, the British reserve, the Hessian Grenadiers and Chasseurs, under the command of Lieutenant-General Clinton, having with him Earl Cornwallis, Major-General Vaughan, Brigadier-General Leslie and Colonel Donop, embarked at the head of Newtown Creek, and landed about noon upon New York Island, about three miles from the town, at a place called Kip's Bay, under the fire of two forty gun ships and three frigates. * * * The rebels had troops in their works round Kip's Bay, but their attention being engaged in expectation of the King's troops landing at Stuyvesant Cove, at Horen's Hook, and at Harlem, which they had reason to conclude, Kip's Bay became only a secondary object of their care. The fire of the shipping being so well directed, and so incessant the enemy could not remain in their works, and the descent was made without the least opposition.—Jay, 75.

General Washington says: The enemy, to the amount of three or four thousand, had marched to the river and were embarked for Barn or Montrossor's Island, where numbers of them were encamped. I proceeded to Harlem, where it was supposed, or at Morrisania, opposite, the principal attempt to land would be made.—Jay, 40.

The landing was finally made at Kip's Bay, which was unexpected by the Americans, and was a surprise, that point being least prepared to resist them.

The landing was made under a most severe and heavy cannonading from the five men-of-war lying in the East River, close in with our shore, distant but about fifty rods (Silliman) kept up to scour the grounds and cover the landing of their troops between Turtle Bay and the City, where light breast-works had been thrown up to oppose them. The statement of General Howe was true, that under a fire so well directed and incessant, the American troops could not remain in their

works, much less could they withstand it outside their works, while the cannon balls and grape-shot were scouring the grounds.

This severe cannonading on our lines was kept up for "some hours," says Colonel Humphreys. The Hessian Major Baurmeister, says *three hours*, and Colonel Nicholas Fish, then a Major, says: *A cannonading from the ships began, which far exceeded my ideas, and which served to infuse a panic through the whole of our troops.*—Jay, 58. The cannonade from the men-of-war was a new experience to them.

THE PANIC.

Especially was this so with the Connecticut brigade, who were mostly new levies, and badly commanded, and, unfortunately, were posted upon the left where the enemy landed without the least opposition.—Jay, 58. Nothing is so contagious as a panic, and it immediately infected those on the right, *officers as well as men, inasmuch that it magnified the number of the enemy to twice the reality.* The first company or two of the British soldiers which landed—Captain Beatty of the Maryland line, says there were 150 of them that first landed,—Jay, 63,—marched up the landing place with the tread of British veterans, and thousands more from the fleet of 84 flat bottomed boats, paraded in crescent form, were there to follow in their footsteps, while about three times as many more were near, and ready to land. This struck these raw troops with surprise, and soldiers and officers refused to meet them, and fled. It is well characterized by Major Fish, as a panic through the whole of our troops at that landing. But for this panic, the Americans might have opened fire upon the British, which could hardly have failed to bring on a most useless, bloody and disastrous battle.

Napoleon said that Waterloo was lost by a panic. After the Battle of the Nations, at Leipsic, the French army, under Macdonald and Poniatowski, veterans of the great victories of Napoleon, fled like sheep, and in their panic plunged into the river, and thousands of those panic stricken braves, including the Prince himself, were drowned. Panic is not cowardice.

Panic is an inexplicable sympathetic infirmity of animated nature.

The behavior of the troops at that time, in declining to face that fearful cannonade, and in retreating as they did, although confronted by a very small force actually landed, has often been characterized as an act of cowardice, but not without injustice; no one could justify them, had they stood their ground and fallen in so useless an exhibition of foolhardy, animal courage—courage without glory—if, indeed, the army should not be captured. As it was, Major Chapman and a few others were killed, and others wounded, and Colonel Samuel Selden and brigade-Major Wyllys and others, were taken prisoners. Such seems to have been the judgment of the cool and discreet General Heath, at the time. He says: *Here the Americans, we are sorry to say, did not behave well. * * * But several things may have weight here. The wounds received on Long Island were yet bleeding, and the officers, if not the men, knew the City was not to be defended* (Jay, 73), and General George Clinton says, in his letter to the New York Convention, without vituperation: *The enemy landed under cover of a very heavy cannonade from their shipping; our lines were but thinly manned, as they were intended only to secure a retreat to the rear of our army, and unfortunately, by such troops as were so little disposed to stand in the way of grape-shot, that the main body of them almost instantly retreated, nay fled, without the possibility of rallying them.*—Jay, 51; and in his letter to Dr. Tappen, he says simply: *We had but a few men there; those, indeed, did not behave well.*—Jay, 53. The same men fought gallantly the next day on Harlem Heights.—Jay, 67 and 69.

Washington, fearing that the British might take possession of Harlem Plains, as they might do from the Islands, and cut off his retreat to the Harlem Heights, immediately retreated across the Island to Harlem Heights (Jay, 40) to join the troops already there, who had begun to intrench at 161st street. There he encamped with the main body of the army.

THE MARCH OF THE BRITISH TROOPS.

The first division of the British army, instead of hurrying for-

ward across the Island by the Kip's Bay Road to intercept Putnam, *took post on the commanding height of Inculenberg.* Dutch. Engeland Berg, (English Hill), (now called Murray Hill) apparently waiting for the landing of the remaining troops. Here the officers took their deliberate and enjoyable luncheon with the patriotic Mrs. Murray. While ascending the heights of Inculenberg, our troops harrassed them, and the British Major-General Vaughan was wounded, and as the Hessians were moving towards the City, they fell in with a body of Americans retiring from Stuyvesant's Cove, said to have been commanded by Major Aaron Burr. Some firing ensued, and a small number were killed and wounded on each side. As soon as the second division of the British army, which consisted of 8 or 10 thousand, all under the command of Lieutenant-General Earl Percy, was landed and could support those posted on the heights of Inculenberg, they moved on up the straight Middle Road, hoping to intercept Putnam, and to capture a corps of Americans which they discovered *three miles distant towards Kingsbridge, having McGowan's Pass in their rear.*—Jay, 76. This was Colonel Smallwood's regiment of Maryland Regulars, which had been ordered *to march down towards New York to cover the retreat and to defend the baggage, with directions to take possession of an advantageous eminence near the enemy, on the main road. There they remained under arms, the best part of the day, till the brigade commanded by Sergeant came in with the baggage, who were the last troops to come in.*—Jay, 62. The British, seeing that they had failed to intercept Putnam, divided their main body into two columns, one filing off to the North River, endeavored to flank and surround Smallwood's corps, while the other apparently kept on further up Bloomingdale Heights. Smallwood had orders to retreat in good order if it should be necessary, which he did in time, on the approach of the British, *getting within the lines a little after dusk.*—Jay, 62. In the words of General Howe, they *immediately retired to the main body of their army, upon Morris' Heights.*—Jay, 76.

The Americans, under Putnam, barely escaped being captured by the British. The last regiment was fired upon and

its Colonel killed, just at the junction of the Bloomingdale Road with the Kingsbridge Road, where the Americans wheeled to the left, and where the British force sent to capture Smallwood's detachment, was seen coming down on their right. Ten minutes after Putnam passed, the British line was extended to the Hudson River, completing their line from Horen's Hook on the East River, at 90th street, to just above Bloomingdale on the Hudson River, with their *camp on the Bloomingdale Heights, extending from McGowans and the Black Horse, to the North River.*—Jay, 52.

Colonel Humphrey says that General Putnam's division joined the army after dark on the *Heights of Harlem*, having been given up as lost by their friends. *That night, says he, our soldiers, excessively fatigued by the sultry march of the day, their clothes wet by a severe shower of rain towards the evening, their blood chilled by the cold wind that produced a sudden change in the temperature of the air, and their hearts sunk within them by the loss of baggage, artillery and works in which they had been taught to place great confidence, lay upon their arms, covered only by the clouds of an uncomfortable sky. * * * * The regiments that had been least exposed to fatigue that day, furnished the necessary picquets to secure the army from surprise.*—Humphrey, 138.

THE POSITIONS OF THE TWO ARMIES.

On these Harlem Heights made for defence, the army, under Washington, consisting of about 8,000 effective men, many of them new levies, besides the sick and wounded, was encamped on the night before the battle of September 16th, dispirited and discouraged by the recent military events. Washington rarely wrote with so much discouragement as at this time. He felt that his militia could not be relied on, and were at best a temporary force. The British army, under Howe, consisting of a larger number of veteran British Regulars, fresh from rest after victory, and elated with the possession of the City and of the Island to above the 8th milestone, lay in the charming region of Bloomingdale, below and upon Bloomingdale Heights. The evacuation of the City was a hurried

retreat, with the loss of baggage and cannon, and the movements of the British were a rapid pursuit. The American army had reached its destination, and was wholly on Harlem Heights, without any serious encounter, and with but trifling loss, and at a late hour when they went to rest, the two armies with their respective pickets placed on the sides of the Manhattanville Valley, were in position, in force, face to face, after the labors, the mortifications, the disappointments and chagrins of that weary and eventful day. In plain sight of both lines of pickets, Harlem Plains was spread out on the east, its fields covered with the fruits and harvests of early autumn.

The position of the armies at this time is a great fact about which there is no dispute, and it has a most important bearing in relation to the place of the battle. It controls many others. Where the American army was, there it was attacked, and there it was successfully defended.

General Washington's headquarters was the Morris House, at 161st street. His army was, of course, in front of him. The picket lines of his army extended along the eastern brow of the heights, overlooking the plains, to the Point of Rocks, and thence along the heights overlooking the Manhattanville valley, to the Hudson River, at Matje David's Fly. *The "Point of Rocks" which skirted the road leading to Kingsbridge was our most advanced picket toward New York.*—Jay, 75.

Our army consisted of *the reserve, the main body and the advanced guard*, all in front of headquarters. The reserve would be encamped nearest headquarters. The main body lay about one-quarter to one-third of a mile further south, and the advanced guard of two brigades, commanded by General Greene, lay still further down in the woods (Sauthier's Map), on the western portion of the heights.—Jay, 55-66. General George Clinton says: *Our army lay at Colonel Morris's, and so southward to near the hollow-way which runs across from Harlem Flat to the North River, at Matje David's Fly, about half way between which two places our lines run across to the river, which, indeed, at that time, were only begun, but are now (21st) in a very defensible state.*—Jay, 53. These entrenchments were thrown up during the day by Colonel Silliman's entrenching brigades.

Washington's army thus occupied about a mile and a half north and south. *The enemy's main army was encamped between 7th and 8th milestones.*—Jay, 65, 97th and 115th streets. *General Howe's headquarters at one Mr. Apthorp's.*—Jay, 65. The two headquarters were three miles apart. Half way between them was the Manhattanville valley. Lieutenant Harris, of the 5th British foot, says: *After landing at New York, we drove the Americans into their works beyond the 8th milestone from New York, and thus got possession of the best part of the Island. We took post opposite to them, and placed our pickets.*—Jay, 79. This was on the 15th. The British had their pickets along the brow of the heights, south of Harlem Plains, to the Bloomingdale Heights and Hogeland Heights, on the North River.

Above Howe's headquarters was his army, 10,000 or 12,000 strong, *in two columns*, one British and the other German troops. Such an army could not be arranged in less extent than the smaller army of Washington—a mile and a half—and most probably it reached to about 115th street with its reserve and main body; and the Van, or advanced guard, composed of Donop's Yagers and some English troops, must have reached to about 120th street, and the extreme Van, being Leslie's British Light Infantry, would be a little further up, while their pickets were on the southwestern brow of that hollow-way, Graydon says, only separated from the American pickets *by a valley a few hundred yards over.*—Jay, 75. General McDougall's letter to the convention, 7th Oct., 1876, says the same, 1 Rev. Papers, 487.

On the morning of the 16th, Colonel Silliman, with a force of 1,000 officers and men, with at least another brigade, commenced lines of entrenchments, and before night had thrown up lines across the Island at about 153d street, where there were already three redoubts placed at intervals across the Island.—Jay, 57. Sauthier's Map.

THE MORNING SKIRMISH "NEAR THE POINT OF MATJE DAVID'S FLY."

At early dawn on the morning of the 16th, there was a skirmish between small portions of the two armies, in which

the American party was compelled to retreat a long distance before a much superior force. The impetuous General Leslie, whose light infantry was the van of the British army, probably supposed, from the events of the last few days, that they had been pursuing not merely a retreating force, but a timid, cowardly and flying enemy, and that an early and rapid movement might strike a successful blow. He accordingly, without orders and without any proper arrangements for support, or for possible retreat, set out before daybreak with a battalion of light infantry—400 men—to endeavor to surprise and capture the American advance guard, which lay in the woods at about 133d street to 140th street and Eleventh avenue. Before reaching them, however, he encountered the brave Colonel Knowlton, who, with his rangers, had been sent by General Washington at that early hour, *as a reconnoitring party to gain intelligence, if possible, of the disposition of the enemy* (Jay, 40), and *to go and take the enemy's advanced guard*, Captain Brown, —Jay, 60.

Colonel Knowlton *set out* from his camp near headquarters *just before day* (4 or 5 A. M.) with 120 picked men, and probably took the route of the unobstructed low shore of the river to below Matje David's Fly, and opposite the left flank of the English advanced guard, say about 120th street, where he intended to mount up Hogeland's or Vandewater's Heights and cut off that detachment of the enemy. The British General, apparently, determined to take the same course also, by the descent of the same heights, to the river—both parties probably supposing that the woods that covered all those heights along the shore, would protect them from observation on their secret expedition—the Americans relying upon the fancied security of the British—and the British trusting to the imaginary timidity of the Americans. The two parties discovered each other at the same time at daybreak, and took the order of battle without hesitation, and the British marched up within six rods of the Americans. After a brief engagement, the British—being more than three to one of the rangers—made a movement to outflank and surround them, when Knowlton, after having given them eight rounds apiece, ordered a retreat and took to the woods in good order, to *come in* for support.

With a seeming intention of retreating to the main body, he retired into the interior part of the woods (Jay, 80), closely pursued by the British, also in the woods.

Lieutenant Harris, of the 5th British foot, says: *After landing on York Island we drove the Americans (Putnam's division) into their works beyond the eighth milestone from New York, and thus got possession of the best half of the Island. We took post opposite to them, and placed our picquets.*—Jay, 79.

On the 16th the light infantry (Leslie) were sent out to dislodge a party of the enemy, which had taken possession of a wood on the left of the British.—Stewart, Jay, 78.

On the morning of the 16th September, a detachment was sent out from the main body of the Americans, to a wood facing the left flank of the English army. Three companies of our light infantry were despatched to dislodge them, the enemy with a seeming intention of retreating to the main body, retired into the interior part of the woods.—Stedman, Jay, 80. The Hessian account corresponds in substance—correcting the German rendering of proper names.

*On the 16th September, quite a brisk fight took place on York Island; the Americans on the morning of this day sent from their camp a strong detachment which came out of the woods and attacked our left wing. * * General Leslie, who was in command of the British, soon encountered a severe resistance. * * Colonel Van Donop received orders to move up to their support. He moved up with his Yagers. The Yagers who swarmed forward, soon came to a hot contest on Hoyland's (Hogeland's) Hill. The Americans retired.*—Hessian account, Jay, 81, 82. Hogeland's Hill was near the shore near the point of Matje David's Fly. *The English Light Infantry advanced too quickly on the retreat of the enemy, and at Bruckland Hill (Hogeland Hill) fell into an ambuscade, &c.*—Baurmeister, Jay, 82.

On the 16th, in the morning, a large party of the enemy having passed under cover of the woods near to the advanced post of the army, by way of Vandewater's Heights, the second and third battalion of light infantry, supported by the 42d regiment, pushed forward and drove them back to their entrenchments.—General Howe, Jay, 77. Their nearest entrenchments at that time were at headquarters at 161st street, a mile and a half or two miles distant.

The enemy finally supposed that Knowlton's retreat was intended to draw them into an ambuscade of 3,000 men, in the woods, Hessian account, Jay, 81, referring to our advance guard under Greene, which they afterwards encountered.

We have thus from three high British authorities, in language substantially alike, a statement of the morning affair between Knowlton and Leslie, *on the left wing of the British advanced post.*

The Americans, on the morning of this day sent from their camp a strong detachment, which came out of the wood and attacked our left wing.—Hessian account, Jay, 81.

An officer of Knowlton's rangers, probably Captain Brown, gives, from actual participation, the American account of the unsuccessful attack by Knowlton *on the left wing* of the enemy's advanced post.

*On Monday morning the General ordered us to go and take the enemy's advanced guard. Accordingly, we set out just before day and found where they were. At daybreak we were discovered by the enemy who were 400 strong, and we were 120. They marched up within six rods of us, and then formed to give us battle, which we were ready for, and Colonel Knowlton gave orders to fire, which we did, and stood theirs till we perceived they were getting their flank guards round us. After giving them eight rounds apiece the Colonel gave orders for retreating, which we performed very well, without the loss of a single man while retreating. * * We retreated two miles and a half, and then made a stand and sent off for a re-inforcement.*—Jay, 60.

General Reed, who had gone down and met Knowlton's party, says of the retreat: *The enemy advanced upon us very fast. I had not quitted a house five minutes before they were in possession of it. Finding how things were going, I went "over" to the General to get some support for the brave fellows who had behaved so well. By the time I got to him the enemy appeared in open view, and in the most insulting manner sounded their bugle horns, as is usual after a fox chase.*—Jay, 48.

Lewis Morris, Jr., gives substantially the same account of this morning affair of Knowlton, placing the attack upon the Rangers as on a height a little to the southwest of Dayes's Tavern, which would be on the left flank or wing of the

British van or advanced guard, on Hogeland's or Vandewater's Height.—Jay, 56.

This is the account of the engagement soon after day-break, between Leslie and Knowlton, from which Knowlton retreated to headquarters for re-inforcement. This early morning skirmish between Knowlton and Leslie, near the point of Matje David's Fly, was no part of the Battle of Harlem Heights. In it the Americans were defeated. It was an unfortunate affair, to be concealed rather than to be dwelt upon, and we accordingly find hardly a mention of its details, except in the letter of an officer, doubtless Captain Brown, Knowlton's successor, to his friend in New London.—Jay, 60. The place of that skirmish is nowhere mentioned, except in General Clinton's letter to Dr. Tappen, Jay, 53, which letter contains no details of the skirmish in the morning, but is mainly devoted to the battle several hours later in the day, in which Knowlton was killed.

THE BATTLE OF THE MIDDLE OF THE DAY, CALLED THE
"ACTION" OR "BATTLE."

We come now to the principal battle of the day, *the Battle of Harlem Heights*, which began at about eleven o'clock in the morning, and ended about 3 P. M. There were at that time no fortifications across the heights below Morris' House, except *three little redoubts in about a mile*, Jay, 57, from about 153d street, North River, to about 158th street, at Macomb's Dam, Harlem River. Before Washington had occupied Morris' House as headquarters, the troops already there had begun to throw up entrenchments above that house; when it became headquarters those entrenchments were neglected as of no present utility, and on the morning of the 16th, the brigades of which Colonel Silliman's command was a part, were ordered to connect those redoubts and strengthen them by entrenchments quite across the Island, about a quarter to a third of a mile below headquarters and about half a mile further down, say about 135th to 140th street; *in the woods we had two other brigades lying as an advanced guard*, Jay, 57, commanded by General Greene.—Jay, 66. This is where *the action first began*, which was called the Battle of Harlem Heights. Note 1.

In the American general orders after the battle, the same day, the arrangement for the night upon the heights commanding the hollow-way from the North River to the main road leading from New York to Kingsbridge, General Clinton was ordered to form next to the North River, and extend to the left. General Scott next to Clinton on the left, and Colonel Sayer next to Scott.—Jay, 65. General Clinton says: *That night I commanded the right wing of our advanced party, or picket, on the ground the action first began, where a party of about a thousand came and attacked our advanced post, Greene, Jay, 55—where the enemy next day, at Harlem Heights, flushed with the successes of the day before, approached and attacked our lines where I had the honor to command, Greene, Jay, 66, and it was to our advanced post that his excellency sent and ordered a timely retreat, Greene, Jay, 56, when the British rout became general.*—Jay, 68.

General Washington, in his letter to Congress, dated at Morris' House, September 18th, says: *About the time of the post's departure with my letter, the enemy appeared in several large bodies upon the plains, about 2½ miles from here. I rode down to our advanced posts to put matters in a proper situation if the enemy should attempt to come on. When I arrived there I heard firing, which I was informed was between a party of our Rangers, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Knowlton, and an advanced party of the enemy.*—Jay, 41.

In his letter to the New York Convention, dated the 23d, he describes the same events as follows: *On Monday morning last several parties of the enemy appeared on the high ground opposite to our heights, and some skirmishing had happened between our troops and those of the enemy.*—Jay, 44.

He thus, in one letter, calls the locality the plains about 2½ miles from here, and in the other he calls it the high ground opposite to our heights, evidently meaning by the plains about 2½ miles from here, not Harlem Plains, but the plains (the open grounds) on the high ground of Bloomingdale Heights, below Manhattanville hollow—Bloomingdale Heights, opposite to Harlem Heights. From Colonel Silliman's letter, it is apparent that General Washington, when he rode down to put matters in a proper situation in case the enemy should attempt to come on (Jay, 41), had ordered under arms our brigades, not only those

commanded by Silliman, but the two brigades lying *half a mile below in the woods, as an advanced guard*, commanded by General Greene, and directed them to be ready to resist any attack which should be made.

The enemy did not then *attempt to come on*, and General Washington returned to headquarters. *Silliman's brigades then grounded their arms and took spades and shovels and went to work.*—Jay, 57. They, Silliman's brigades, were not called to arms again, but *were throwing earth from the new trenches, during the action, with an alacrity that indicated a determination to defend them.*—Humphrey, 143. The enemy on Bloomingdale Heights had probably heard the firing between Knowlton and Leslie, and were now waiting to learn what had become of Leslie with his detachment of light troops, which had disappeared, and was then silently pursuing Knowlton through the woods on his way back to headquarters for a reinforcement. At ten or eleven o'clock they may well have heard the bugle horn of Leslie and the firing at the feint, and the unfortunate flank attack in the woods at about 153d street to 158th street. Then they immediately came on, apparently to the rescue of Leslie, and *a little before twelve o'clock* encountered the advanced guard of two brigades under Greene lying in the woods at about 125th to 140th streets, and *began a heavy fire on these two brigades*, who, according to the directions of Washington, *maintained the fire obstinately for some time. Then they were reinforced by several regiments, and the fire continued very heavy from musketry and from field pieces about two hours.*—Jay, 57. General Clinton says that *the enemy received a very considerable reinforcement and made their second stand; our people also had received a considerable reinforcement, and at this place a very brisk action commenced, which continued for near two hours.*—Jay, 54.

Thence we drove the enemy 200 paces south east, when they rallied. We then drove them about 400 paces, probably to our advanced guard then engaged with the enemy in the woods, when came on the grand fight of several hours between the two armies, both increased by repeated reinforcements to several thousand on a side, in a buckwheat field on the top of a hill on Bradhurst's farm, whence they retreated the third time towards their lines, we pursuing till we were called

off because of the bad make of the ground and the approach of a large body of the enemy just behind the brow of Bloomingdale Heights.—Jay, 52.

Knowlton, as I have said, *came in* to camp, made a report to Washington and asked for a reinforcement. The enemy's light troops soon made their appearance. One hundred of them coming out of the woods *on the high grounds opposite the Americans' camp* (Jay, 46), blowing their bugle horn in notes of triumph or bravado, and took post on the brow of the western heights at the side of the 158th street hollow-way, west of Eleventh avenue, leaving three hundred of their party concealed in the woods in their rear.

Adjutant-General Reed had ridden down to our advanced guard to see the condition of things, and he *went over* to headquarters and begged Washington to reinforce Knowlton. Washington, after a little hesitation, complied with the double request of Reed and Knowlton, and directed Reed to accompany the reinforced party, principally Southern troops, commanded by the brave Major Leitch. Washington was to make a feint of attacking the British in front from the north, while he gave Leitch and Knowlton orders to get in their rear, and surround and capture them. This was attempted. A departure, however, from Washington's directions, brought on an unfortunate flank attack, instead of an attack in the rear.

THE UNFORTUNATE FLANK ATTACK.

It has been suggested by Mr. Dawson, that General Putnam was probably justly chargeable with this departure from the orders of General Washington. The proof is clear that it was an inferior officer, the impetuous and brave commander of the Virginia troops, that was guilty of that indiscretion which called for the pointed rebuke of General Washington after the battle, and was the cause of his positive order on the next day providing against such another occurrence, in which he says: *The loss of the enemy yesterday, undoubtedly would have been much greater if the orders of the Commander-in-Chief had not, in some instance, been contradicted by some inferior officers, who, however well they may mean, ought not to presume to direct. It is therefore ordered that no officer commanding a*

party, and having received orders from the Commander-in-Chief, depart from them without counter orders from the same authority.—Jay, 66. Adjutant-General Reed was to guide the party that was to reinforce Knowlton and Leitch. It was one party to cut off the retreat of the enemy, and not two parties to fall on his two flanks. Knowlton and Leitch were together. They fell near each other, and near where Knowlton was buried. The falling on the enemy's flank was the great blunder of the day. The party consisted of *three companies of Virginia Riflemen, and Colonel Knowlton, with his Rangers*, who were directed by Washington to endeavor to get in the rear of the enemy while their attention should be attracted by a feint to attack them on their front.—Jay, 44-45.

The enemy consisted of two portions. The smaller portion, about 100, in open view, were probably those who had blown the hunter's horn, and the other, about 300, lay concealed. It is not unlikely that Major Leitch led the party far enough down to cut off the retreat of the smaller and exposed party, and attempted to do so, by which premature movement he came upon the flank of the enemy's right flank, posted out of our sight on lower ground (Johnston, 254, note 1), instead of the rear of the larger party of 300 concealed in the woods, which immediately changed front and gave them an unexpected and hot reception, to which Leitch and Knowlton fell victims. A movement was made by the feint which diverted the Virginia regiment and caused it to disobey its orders and attack the enemy on the flank. Adjutant-General Reed says: *An unhappy movement was made by a regiment of ours which had been ordered to amuse them, while those I was with expected to take them in the rear, but being diverted by this, the Virginia regiment with which I was, went another course. Finding there was no stopping, I went with them the new way, and in a few minutes our brave fellows mounted up the rocks and attacked them. The Virginia-Major, Leitch, who went up first with me was wounded with three shot in less than three minutes.—Jay, 48. He stood the field with the greatest bravery till the third shot, when he was obliged to fall.—Jay, 62.*

Colonel Knowlton, about the same time, fell with a mortal wound. The loss of those two heroic officers may be consid-

ered as justly attributable to that departure from his orders by Major Leitch. Their men under their captains and subaltern officers went in with characteristic bravery and spirit, maintained their ground and *continued the engagement with the greatest resolution*, driving the enemy first 200 paces and then 400 paces as has been stated. Washington says: *Finding that they wanted a support I advanced part of Colonel Griffith's and Colonel Richardson's Maryland regiments, with some detachments from the Eastern regiments who were nearest the place of action. These troops charged the enemy with great intrepidity and drove them from the wood into the plain or open ground.*

Leitch and Knowlton fell within a few minutes of each other, almost at the feet of Adjutant-General Reed, who assisted Knowlton off his horse, and he repeats his heroic words as he fell.

When gasping in the agonies of death all his inquiry was if we had drove the enemy.—Reed, Jay, 48. Captain Brown says: *My poor colonel was shot just by my side; I took hold of him, asked him if he was badly wounded. He told me he was, but says he, I do not value my life if we do but get the day. I then ordered two men to carry him off.* * * *He seemed as unconcerned and calm as though nothing had happened to him.*—Jay, 60, 61. And Leitch received three balls through his body *in less than three minutes. He stood the field with the greatest bravery till the third shot when he was compelled to fall; after he fell he was in good spirits.*—Jay, 62. Adjutant-General Reed *mounted him (Leitch) on his horse and brought him off. In the spot where Knowlton fell, at least within four rods round him, lay 15 or 16 of the enemy dead, with five or six of our own people.*—Jay, 61. How heroically they intended to repair the blunder of that flank attack! Of the ten men which the Rangers lost in the whole action five or six fell within a few feet of where Knowlton was wounded, and 15 or 16 of the enemy, dead, lay there also. —Jay, 61.

Knowlton was carried by two of his men to a neighboring redoubt, and there he was buried the next day with the honors of war.—Note 2. Mr. Dawson and Mr. Lossing agree within a short distance as to the place of his burial. Mr. Dawson says on 154th street, and Mr. Lossing on 156th street near the

Hudson River. Mr. Nelson Chase, a respectable lawyer of this city, who has resided for more than forty years in the Jumel House, formerly the Morris House, and who was on the most familiar terms with Colonel Burr while he resided there as the husband of Madame Jumel, says that Colonel Burr informed him that Knowlton fell about 153d street and 11th avenue, and that he was buried in 156th street near 10th avenue, and that Knowlton's camp was quite near to Washington's headquarters. Major David Henley was at that time Deputy-Adjutant-General, and must have had his quarters near the Commander-in-Chief, Major David Henley and Major Thomas Henley were brothers. The body of Thomas was taken to his brother's quarters and was, the next day, the 24th, buried *from* there by the side of Knowlton, with military honors.—Heath, 66. Colonel Burr was one of the aids of General Putnam, and was doubtless in the battle. Note 3.

After the loss of these officers the command was taken by General Putnam and General Greene with about 1,500 to 1,800 men of their divisions, our whole force engaged being at that time probably 4,000 men—the enemy having a larger number, General George Clinton thought between 4,500 and 5,000 of their choicest troops. It was by the *spirited conduct* in generalship, activity and command, of Putnam and Greene and Reed, that the day was so signally and so beneficially saved to the American cause.—Jay, 50. Reed's horse was shot under him.—Jay, 50, Note 2. *They behaved nobly.*—Jay, 56, 67.

An officer of the Maryland line the day after the battle says: *Yesterday morning the Regulars came within half a mile of our lines (the Maryland lines) and made a stand. A few of our scouts who were out attacked them and drove them off. In two hours after, 2,000 of them returned. General Beal sent out three companies of riflemen, under Major Mantz, who attacked them. Immediately General Washington reinforced them with the remainder of our brigade, together with General Weedon's regiment from Virginia, Major Price's three independent companies, and one regiment of Rhode Islanders. Never did troops go to the field with more cheerfulness and alacrity, when there began a heavy fire on both sides. It continued about an hour when our brave Southern troops dislodged them from their posts. The*

enemy rallied, our men beat them a second time. They rallied again, our troops drove them a third time and were rushing on them, but the enemy had got on an eminence and our troops were ordered to retreat, the General considering there might be a large number of the enemy behind the hill concealed, which was the case.—Jay, 61. Captain Beatty, another Maryland officer, writes to his father: *On Monday last the enemy thought to drive our troops farther, and sallied out and were attacked by Major Mantz with the three rifle companies of our battalion under his command, and Major Price with three of the independent companies of Maryland troops and three other companies of the Maryland Flying Camp, and a battalion of Virginians, and some Northern troops. The attack was very sharp on both sides for an hour and a half, then the enemy retreated a mile and a half to their lines.*—Jay, 62.

We now turn to other important original proofs as to the positions, purposes and operations of the two armies during this 16th day of September.

On the morning of that day, before the battle, General Washington wrote to the President of Congress: *We are now encamped with the main body of the army on the Heights of Harlem, where I should hope the enemy would meet with a defeat in case of an attack, if the generality of our troops would behave with tolerable bravery. But experience, to my extreme affliction, has convinced me that this is rather to be wished for than expected.*—Jay, 40. And on the 20th he wrote to General Schuyler, dated at “Colonel Roger Morris’ ”: *The British army lies encamped about 2 miles below us * * * * and we are putting ourselves in the best position of defence that time and circumstances will admit of* (Jay, 43), and General Knox says shortly after the battle: *The grounds on which we now possess are strong. I think we shall defend them. If we don’t, I hope God will punish us in this world and the world to come if the fault is ours.*—Jay 58. Washington evidently expected to be further pursued and attacked, and had chosen this strong position on Harlem Heights where he might make a stand and hope to defeat any attack of the enemy. He had no thought himself of attacking. This fact sheds light upon the whole affair. It was throughout a defence.

THE PEN AND INK PLAN OF BATTLE.

There is a rude pen and ink topographical sketch of the field of battle, extending from Washington's headquarters to the British picket line below Manhattanville on the parallel of Harlem Village about 123d to 125th street, made soon after the battle, and apparently by or under the dictation of General George Clinton.—See copy plan, Jay, 68. This is a most important piece of evidence. It was furnished to John Sloss Hobart, who was then a member of the first New York State Convention, which sat in Harlem from July 29th to August 29th, 1776, less than three weeks before the battle. He had also been a member of the four provincial Congresses of New York sitting in New York, and was subsequently a member of the State Convention for framing a constitution and was on the committee to prepare it. He was a Judge of the Supreme Court for 21 years, a member of the State Convention for adopting the Constitution of the United States, a Senator of the United States, and finally District Judge of the United States till his death. He was thus a man of the highest respectability, of the most reliable character, and of much experience and intelligence in public affairs, and doubtless was familiar with the localities. Mr. Hobart gave this sketch to the Rev. Dr. Stiles, who was the next year appointed President of Yale College, and was a great patriot and kept a journal of public events.—Jay, 68–69.

On that sketch the action is laid down as beginning near the Hudson River about the 10th milestone, and ending about the 8th milestone. The milestones are marked on the plan. At that time the 8th milestone on the old road was on 125th street in the Village of Harlem, and the 10th milestone would be about two miles further up, say at about 164th street, a short distance above Washington's headquarters, where some intrenchments were begun. There was another eighth milestone on the other road half a mile further down at about 115th street and 7th avenue, placed there because that road just below had run at right angles to the main road for about half a mile. As Judge Hobart, as member of the State Convention, had spent the previous month in Harlem Village where the

8th milestone stood on 125th street, it is probable that that 8th milestone was the one intended on the sketch, it being placed about on the parallel of Harlem Village. The buckwheat field, in which the hottest and much the largest part of the action was fought, is laid down on this sketch and was at about 145th street. The British, after one or two hours' hard fighting at that place *broke and ran*.—Jay, 59. They pretended to rally at an orchard at about 121st street and 9th avenue. As their ammunition was exhausted, the halt was only a pretence, and after a brief rally they fled across and up a hill to near their own lines (camps). There, Adjutant Reed and Colonel Tilghman called off our troops, a retreat being ordered by General Washington, who thought, as proved to be the fact, that a heavy British force was coming on over the Bloomingdale hills, threatening attack, which could hardly fail to lead to a general action for which he was then unprepared, especially as the ground was disadvantageous as well for fighting as for a retreat.—Jay, 52. The British being on the rising and high grounds of Bloomingdale Heights, the Americans, if they continued the pursuit, must charge up a hill with an exposed valley with rocky cliffs and narrow passes in their rear.

The American army, with the exception of Heath's troops at Kingsbridge, lay at Morris Heights and so southward to near Manhattanville. There were no entrenchments south of Morris house at the time of the battle. At 161st street, there were entrenchments thrown up before Washington arrived there with the main army. During and after the battle on the same day entrenchments to connect and strengthen three little redoubts were commenced about 153d to 155th streets and completed by the 21st *in a very defensible state*.—Jay, 53. These entrenchments were where Colonel Silliman lay with his command which was part of what he calls *our Brigades*. *About half a mile below in the woods lay two other Brigades as an advanced guard*, these were under the command of General Greene.—Jay, 55 and 66. Colonel Silliman says under date of the 17th—*Yesterday a little before noon*, the time when by all accounts the main battle began, *we heard a strong firing about half a mile below us, where we had two brigades lying*

as an advanced guard. The enemy, in a large body, advanced in the woods a little before 12 o'clock and began a heavy fire on those two brigades who maintained the fire obstinately for some time and then they were reinforced by several regiments and the fire continued very heavy from the musketry and the field pieces about two hours, in which time our people drove the regulars back from post to post about a mile and a half and then left them.—Jay, 57. This is a description of the whole main battle, with time and place, written on the spot the next day by one of the most reliable officers in the army, and it is not possible to doubt that the fighting of which he speaks was on Harlem Heights, within the American picket lines. Capt Gooch, of the Massachusetts line, confirms this account fully.—Jay, 59. This covers the time from a little before noon to three o'clock. What had been done before that ?

General Clinton, says : *On Monday morning the enemy attacked our advanced party commanded by Colonel Knowlton, near the point of Matje David's Fly. General Washington says: I heard a firing which I was informed was between a party of our Rangers under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Knowlton, and an advanced party of the enemy. Neither of these describe the engagement, or mention the long retreat of our force and the pursuit by the enemy, but pass immediately to the events of the main battle and its triumphs, several hours later in the day. Colonel Reed, who was present says: Our men behaved well, and stood and returned the fire till overpowered by numbers they were obliged to retreat (Jay, 47-48), and were pursued. Reed went over to the General to get some support for the brave fellows who had behaved so well.—Jay, 48. By that time Knowlton had also come in and asked for a reinforcement. Before the reinforcement could be arranged the pursuing enemy appeared and blew the hunter's horn of triumph, which Reed heard with deep mortification. The party of the enemy in sight must have been 100, as the men who "came in" informed General Washington that the body of the enemy amounting to 300 kept themselves concealed.—Jay, 41.*

This could have happened but at one place—near the headquarters of Washington and his military family, including Colonel Reed the Adjutant-General, and near the camp of

Knowlton, sometimes called General Washington's body guard, $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles above Manhattanville.

The lines of an army are sometimes its pickets—its line of pickets. The word *lines* is often used in many other senses also—a line of march—a line of battle—a line of fortifications—a line of entrenchments—a line of encampment.

On the night of the 15th, before the battle, the American picket lines ran from the Point of Rocks north-westward to the Hudson River, along the face of the north side of the Manhattanville valley, and northeasterly along the south-eastern face of Harlem Heights to Harlem River. The British picket lines extended from Horen's Hook, on the East River, at 90th street, along the high grounds to and at McGowan's pass, to the end of the high grounds on the south side of the western end of the Harlem Plains at 125th street. So are the authorities, and it is quite apparent that the two sides of that valley could not fail to be made picket lines, because of the panoramic view they furnished of the neighboring localities.

The field is the place where the battle is fought, sometimes meaning the whole range of hostilities, and sometimes the mere place of a local encounter.

Mifflin says : *We lost about 100 killed and wounded, and beat the enemy from the field of battle.*—Jay, 67. Mr. Ellery says : *With equal numbers, we drove the enemy from the field.*—Jay, 69. Gordon says : *The parties behaved with great bravery, and being supplied with fresh troops, beat the enemy fairly from the field.*—Jay, 70.

General Greene says : *The enemy next day, at Harlem Heights, flushed with the success of the day before, approached and attacked our lines where I had the honor to command. The action, or rather skirmish, lasted about two hours. Our people beat the enemy off the ground.*—Jay, 66.

Major Fish says : *Our advanced guard is posted a mile from our lines. Here it was (at the advanced guard, half a mile below Colonel Silliman) that our brave and heroic Marylanders, Virginians, &c., made a noble and resolute stand against the efforts of the enemy on Monday, the 16th, drove them back, pursued and forced them to retire.*—Jay, 58.

General Greene again says: *The enemy retreated, our people pursued them, and by the spirited conduct of General Putnam and Colonel Reed, the Adjutant-General, our people advanced upon the plain ground, without cover, and attacked and drove them back.*—Jay, 55. The plain ground is the open ground—not woods.

Colonel Silliman says: *Our people drove the regulars back from post to post, about a mile and a half, and then left them.*

General Knox says: *Our people pursued them nearly two miles.*—Jay, 57.

Captain Brown, of the Rangers, who succeeded to Knowlton's command (Humphrey, 142), says: *We retreated two miles and a half, and then made a stand and sent off for a reinforcement, which we soon received, and drove the dogs near three miles.*—Jay, 60.

This is extremely significant. The Rangers who were attacked *near the point of Matje David's Fly*, retreated from there two miles to headquarters, received reinforcements, and then turned upon their pursuers and *drove them near three miles*. There is no mistaking the place and the manner of these movements.

A Maryland correspondent says: *Our brave Southern troops dislodged them from their posts. The enemy rallied and our men beat them the second time. They rallied again, our troops drove them the third time, and were rushing on them, but the enemy had got on an eminence, and our troops were ordered to retreat.*—Jay, 61.

The proof is overwhelming that after the engagement at daybreak between Knowlton and Leslie, wherever the battle was fought, we were attacked on our own ground, which we maintained, and drove the enemy back entirely off from it. That we drove them from the place where the Rangers, after their retreat, were reinforced, *near three miles.*—Jay, 60.

It only remains to state to what place we drove them. Colonel Smallwood and Captain Beatty, of the Maryland Regulars, bravest of the brave that day, fix that beyond all dispute. Colonel Smallwood says: *We drove them back to their lines.*—Jay, 63.

Captain Beatty says: *The attack was very sharp on both*

sides for an hour and a half, and then the enemy retreated one mile and a half to their lines.—Jay, 63. These lines—their picket lines—as before stated, ran along the high ground on the heights from McGowan's pass to the end of the high grounds on the side of the western end of the Harlem Plains at 125th street, and so along the heights overlooking Manhattan valley towards the Hudson River. Their lines of encampment were all along between their pickets and Howe's headquarters. *The British army lies encamped about two miles below us.*—Jay, 43. Their lines of entrenchments, probably only begun on the 16th, were afterwards made very strong from McGowan's pass to the Hudson River, and held by Earl Percy with two brigades of English and one of Hessians, to cover New York (Upcott) till the attacks on Fort Washington, one of which was led by Percy.—Sauthier's map. General Clinton also says: *Our people at length worsted them a third time, caused them to fall back into an orchard* (about 115th street, laid down on the maps of the period), *and from thence across a hollow and up another hill not far distant from their own lines.*—Jay, 52.

It is nowhere said or even intimated, that our troops pursued the retreating enemy back to their lines, but quite the contrary. When the enemy *broke and ran* back to their lines, they went, I suppose, by the Kingsbridge road, leaving the heights at Breakneck hill. We were not allowed to continue the pursuit, but Colonel Tilghman and Colonel Reed, by Washington's orders, called them promptly back to their own lines. *They pursued the enemy as far as was thought proper.*—Jay, 49. *His Excellency sent and ordered a timely retreat to our advanced post.*—Jay, 56. Washington says: *Finding it prudent to withdraw them.*—Jay, 45. There is no proof or allegation in all this evidence, that a shot was fired by the Americans after the British finally *broke and ran* at the buckwheat field, and left the field of actual conflict.

There was no extended plan of battle on either side. It was a battle in pieces—fighting in a variety of places. They fought in scouts and squads, in battalions and brigades. They went in where there was an opening, and they fought till they were reinforced, and then fought on till they drove the enemy. They fought in the woods and in the plain

ground, in the fields, in the road, behind the bushes and the fences, and they clambered up and over the rocks to get at the enemy. On these proofs, taken together, the evidence is overwhelming that Harlem Heights, between 158th street and Manhattanville, west of the Kingsbridge road, was ablaze with the fire of battle from 11 A. M. to 3 P. M. That was the field of battle. The sharp crack of ten companies of rifles, and the rattle of musketry from some six thousand muskets, with the solemn emphasis from two American field pieces and several British field pieces, resounded on that field for four hours of the bravest and most obstinate contest. Up to about 1 o'clock the flank attack and its sharp fighting was in the woods between 145th and 158th streets. Lieutenant Heinrichs, of Donop's corps of Yagers, which had gone to rescue Leslie in his unfortunate pursuit of the retreating Knowlton, was wounded at 1 o'clock and left the field. *Donop, usually so modest, says in his report to General Von-Heister : But for my Yagers, two regiments of Highlanders and British infantry, would have all, perhaps, been captured, for they were attacked by a force four times their number.*—Jay, 82. Baurmeister says : *If the grenadiers, and especially the Hessian Yagers, had not arrived in time to help them, no one of these brave light infantry would have escaped. They lost 70 dead and 200 wounded.*—Jay, 85. At that time the enemy was forced out of cover into the plain ground, a clear field about 200 paces south-east, out of the woods which covered them, into the fields and roads, plain open ground.—Jay, 41, 45, 58, when the second time our people pursued them 400 paces, where both parties received considerable reinforcements, and the battle was continued with unabated spirit for two hours, most of the time in a buckwheat field, about 140th to 145th street, where the forces under Greene and those under Putnam and Reed, kept up the fight till the ammunition of the enemy was entirely exhausted. *No Yager had any ammunition left, all the Highlanders had fired their last shot, says Baurmeister.*—Jay, 83. *Our men having silenced their fire in a great measure, says Washington.*—Jay, 41. The enemy then *broke and ran* in full retreat by the Kingsbridge Road at Breakneck Hill, 148th to 142d streets, till they crossed the Mahattanville pass to near their

lines on an eminence, and there, without ammunition, they pretended to make another stand, to induce the Americans to follow them till they should be met by a large fresh British force, which should swoop up the Americans or drive them off the Island. General Clinton says: *A large body of the enemy being at this time discovered to be in motion, and we finding the ground rather disadvantageous and a retreat likewise rather insecure, without bringing on a general action, (which we did not think prudent to risk.)* Adjutant-General Reed, by orders of General Washington, sent by Colonel Tilghman, called in the troops. "They gave a hurrah and left the field in good order."—(Tilghman). Thus and there where the enemy made their last stand, whither the Americans had driven them, but were not allowed to pursue them, ended this battle, wholly fought on Harlem Heights, and thereafter the *enemy ceased to be troublesome*. No wonder that this first victory of the war, and such a victory, *inspired our troops prodigiously*, and that *they thought of nothing but conquest*. It was a cheering precursor of the second victory, that at Trenton a few weeks later.

APPENDIX.

NOTES.

NOTE 1.

“WHERE THE ACTION FIRST BEGAN.”—Page 30.

The various writers whose statements are quoted as evidence use the words skirmish, attack, action, engagement, battle, so variously that it is not easy to know in some cases to which particular encounter they refer, without a study of the circumstances in which they are used. Thus, when General George Clinton speaks of the place where “the action first began,” he evidently refers to the heavy attack on the advanced guard mentioned by Colonel Silliman and General Greene; and when the author of the pen and ink sketch uses the phrase “where the action began,” he as plainly refers to the flank attack in which Knowlton and Leitch fell, a little below the 10 Mile Stone.

The hostilities of the day consist of three principal parts which together extended from “near the point of Matje David’s Fly—say somewhere between 115th and 120th streets on the left of the British vanguard at Vandewater’s Heights, as stated by me and shown on Captain Hall’s map, about a mile and a quarter above Howe’s headquarters, to the flank attack below Washington’s headquarters, 155th to 158th streets and 11th avenue. The first part embraced only the skirmish between Knowlton and Leslie. The second part was the heavy attack, a little before noon, between 131st and 140th streets, on Greene’s advanced guard. The third was the bloody battle which commenced by the flank attack at about 155th street, and ended where the British broke and ran in full retreat—say 145th to 148th streets. Five sharp encounters, in all of which, except the first, the Americans were victorious.

Extract of a letter from an officer (British) at New York, dated September 23d, 1776--five days after the battle.

The rebels are retreated to works very strong by nature as well as art, about ten miles from New York. There they have remained since the 15th. Their works extend to the termination of the Island of New York, at about 15 miles distant from the town, and on those heights they say they are resolved to make their stand. * * * * I am pretty confident our General will not attack them in their advantageous situation with musketry. He seems determined to make no improper sacrifices. We have a noble train of artillery.

About four days since, the light infantry, who are the van of our army, pressed too gallantly upon a very superior body of the rebels, and drove them off but with the loss of 125 killed and wounded.

Upcott Collections, N. Y. Hist. Society.

MILITARY RELICS ON THE BATTLE FIELDS.

The existence of such relics is not without force as evidence of the places of actual conflict, and in this regard the letters of Hon. James A. Deering, who formerly represented this district in the State Legislature, and Hon. Seth C. Hawley, for many years past the Chief Clerk in the Police Department, and of Colonel Long, the Superintendent of the Harlem Gas Company, and of Rev. Dr. Stoddard, Presbyterian pastor of Carmansville, are interesting as showing that military relics of the battlefield have been found on Harlem Heights at the places where it seems to me so clear, on the evidence, that the fighting actually took place, viz.: the attack on General Greene's Advance Guard, in the vicinity of 132d street and 10th and 11th avenues, and the flank attack at about 155th street, and, so far as now appears, have been found nowhere else, and the bones of a horse, perhaps General Reed's horse, which was disabled under him in the battle, at about the same place.

[Letter of Mr. Deering.]

NEW YORK, *Nov.* 10, 1879.

HON. E. C. BENEDICT, Esq.:

Dear Sir.—In the year 1862, when a boy, I found several cannon balls and an old bayonet, between 131st and 132d streets, between 10th and 11th avenues. I kept them for several years, using and losing them, as boys usually do.

Very truly yours,

JAMES A. DEERING.

— — —

[Letter of Mr. Hawley.]

CENTRAL DEPARTMENT OF POLICE, }
 NO. 300 MULBERRY STREET, }
 NEW YORK, *Dec.* 16th, 1879. }

DEAR SIR.—Concerning “Military Relics of the Revolution,” I beg leave to state : In the Summer of 1879 a party of workmen laying gas mains, exhumed a cannon ball and the very ancient bones of a horse. The strata of earth at the excavation showed that the horse and cannon ball were on the original surface of the ground, not buried, and had been subsequently covered by grading up the ground in recent years.

The exact place was a few feet from the corner of the curb stones on the north easterly corner of 155th street and the grand boulevard, formerly the Eleventh avenue, and near the entrance of my house. It was about 100 feet from a famous spring, known and used in Revolutionary times, since known as the *Audubon spring*, which, in former times, supplied the neighborhood with very fine water.

The cannon ball was, by the foreman of the gang of men, as he informed me, presented to his employer, Colonel Long, of Harlem, the President of the Harlem Gas Light Company, who will, no doubt, take pleasure in exhibiting it to you.

The bones were in an advanced state of decay, and only the

lower jaw was in a condition to be handled ; those I put in my barn. They may have disappeared.

I need only add that the cannon ball and the bones were in such juxtaposition as to favor the idea that the cannon ball killed the horse, and was present when, more than a century since, carrion crows picked the horse's bones.

Very respectfully yours,

S. C. HAWLEY.

Honorable E. C. BENEDICT,

No. 64 Wall street, N. Y.

[Letter of Colonel Long.]

HARLEM, Dec. 24, 1879.

Mr. E. C. BENEDICT:

Dear Sir.—Twelve or fourteen years ago my men found a cannon ball in digging a trench for laying gas pipes on 155th street, about 100 feet west of Tenth avenue. The ball was the only relic which I noticed. I kept it for some years, but think it is now lost.

In the Summer of this year (1879), while digging for laying gas pipes under my direction, the laborers exhumed the bones of a horse and a cannon ball, in such relative position that there could be no doubt that the ball killed the horse. There was also found at the same place a bridle bit and a part of an iron stirrup, partly eaten away by rust. This ball was put into my wagon and taken to the office of the company, where it has been ever since till to-day, when I leave it at your office, presented to you. There was found in the same trench a case knife, the handle eaten away by decay. The earth around these remains was dark by decayed animal matter. The bones were much decayed.

The spot was about 100 feet north of the north line of Trinity Cemetery, and at the corner of Eleventh avenue and 155th street, about 125 feet from the northeasterly corner of

155th street and Eleventh avenue, and about 800 feet west of where the first ball was found.

I have been superintendent of the company from the time of its formation, twenty-three years ago, and have superintended the laying of all its one hundred and twenty odd miles of pipes. The district of the company extends from 79th street north to the end of the island, and from river to river. It is sparsely settled in the upper part. I have no recollection of finding any military relics at any other place.

JACOB M. LONG.

[Letter of Dr. Stoddard.]

THE NEW YORK OBSERVER,
OFFICE, 37 PARK ROW,
NEW YORK, *June 18th, 1880.* }

Honorable E. C. BENEDICT:

DEAR SIR,—In digging the foundations for my house on 155th street, west of Tenth avenue about two hundred feet, ten years ago, a number of revolutionary relics, such as buckles, buttons and bullets were thrown out; and at a public meeting held in the church on the corner of that street some years since, one of the speakers stated that a direct ancestor of his fell by a British shot, on or near the place where the church now stands.

Very respectfully yours,

CHAS. A. STODDARD.

[Letter of Humphrey Jones.]

Address on the envelope "Erastus C. Benedict, Esq., N. Y. University, N. Y. City." Postmark, February 8, 1878. Toledo, O.

DEAR SIR, HISTORICAL SOCIETY.—Reading in the *Herald*, of reminiscences of the battle of Harlem Heights—perhaps I can

give you some insight as to where it was. My father was an old soldier at that time, and fought with Lafayette at Brandywine, and I was with my father to see the general at the old hotel near Trinity Church, and sat on his knee when he was in New York on his last visit. My father at one time lived at Manhattanville, and he has shown me the battle-ground. It commenced on the hill near the asylum, and the Americans drove the British up the road and down the hill, often called by the name of Breakneck Hill. The old gentleman used to say that was the reason they called it Breakneck Hill.

Yours very respectfully,

HUMPHREY JONES,

Toledo, O.

Born N. Y., May 3, 1812,

No. 11 Roosevelt street.

Lived in Manhattanville the time of the yellow fever, I think 1821 or 1822.

Father was known as Tom Jones, fighting quaker of Lafayette's army.

Please to excuse me as I am no letter writer, only a farmer.

Respectfully,

H. J.

In the copy I have corrected the spelling. It is a brief and imperfect account, but shows quite clearly that according to the fighting quaker of 1776, hostilities commenced on the left of the British advance guard about 11th avenue and 120th street (now the asylum) the Americans passing under cover of the woods by way of Vanderwater Heights, (Jay, 77) from near the point of Matje David's Fly, and ended in the precipitate retreat of the British down the precipitous Breakneck Hill.

Mr. Stevens says: *Our best local authority, Colonel Thomas F. Devoc*, sets at rest this story of Mr. Jones, and shows that the name Breakneck Hill originated, not in this retreat of the British, but in an accident to the *Northern Coach*. Colonel Devoc's statement on this subject is found in the Magazine of American History, for May of this year, page 386, in which

he gives an extract from the *N. Y. Journal*, June 20, 1795, stating that as the Harlem Stage was coming down Harlem Hills, the horses took fright, and two men were killed in attempting to get out. Not a word about the Northern Coach or Breakneck Hill. It was the Harlem Stage coming down Harlem Hills which the facile pen of Mr. Stevens has converted into the *Northern Coach*, which would, of course, be coming down the Kingsbridge Road, the grand northern route of public conveyance while the Harlem Stage plied between New York and Harlem on the great eastern route. To this Colonel Devoe adds the gossiping story of a Mr. McGowan living on the east side of the town, that ever since that accident this hill has borne the name of Breakneck Hill.

Now, this statement was made to Mr. Devoe only two years ago, while Mr. Jones' information was received from his father, the fighting quaker of Lafayette's army, in 1822, fifty-six years before that of Mr. McGowan, and both Mr. Stevens and Mr. McGowan are *set at rest* by an old deed, dated May 4, 1786 (Lib. 52. page 330), which makes mention of Breakneck Hill as an apparently well known land mark at that time, nine years before the accident on the Harlem Stage. Mr. Stevens probably had not seen this ancient deed, and naturally enough adopted Mr. McGowan's hearsay statement in his desire to bolster up his entirely inadmissible account of this battle.

NOTE II.—Page 35 and 36.

It has been supposed that after Knowlton fell, Colonel Reed mounted him on his (Reed's) horse and took him from the field. This is evidently a misapprehension. At first look Reed seems to say so. It is, however, Leitch of whom Reed is speaking, and whom he brought off. The sentence, *Knowlton also fell mortally wounded*, is a parenthetical sentence. Knowlton was past being mounted on a horse *when gasping in the agonies of death*. Captain Brown says: *I then ordered two men to carry him off*.—Jay, 60.

NOTE III.—Page 36.

Knowlton, who fell on the 16th, was buried on the 17th, with military honors.—Heath, 61. Major Thomas Henley, who

fell in the unfortunate attempt on Montessor's Island on the morning of the 23d, was buried by his side on the 24th, with military honors.—Heath, 66. Major Leitch lingered till October 1st, when, as is said, he was buried there also. There does not seem to be any reasonable ground for doubt that these three brave officers lie side by side near the north margin of Trinity Cemetery.

NOTE IV.—Preface Page VI.

CAPTAIN OLIVER BROWN.

I copy the following epitaph from the Magazine of American History, Vol. 3, page 376.

' Captain Oliver Brown, of the artillery of the Massachusetts line, Revolutionary war, born in Lexington, Mass., 1752. He stood in front of the first cannon fired by the British on the Americans in the affray at Lexington, witnessed the tea party, Boston Harbor, was at the Battle of Bunker Hill, commissioned by Congress, 16th January, 1776. Commanded the party that bore off the leaden statue of King George from the Battery of New York, and made into bullets for the American army. Bore a conspicuous part in command of artillery at the battles of Harlem Heights, White Plains, Princeton, Trenton, Brandywine, Germantown and Monmouth.

After serving his country he enlisted in the armies of the Son of God, and surrendered to the last enemy on the 17th of February, 1846, in full assurance of a never ending peace.

This is the officer of our army whom Mr. Stevens seeks to discredit with the unfounded and unworthy slur that he was only the author of an anonymous letter, which he was not.

As a Captain of artillery in the Massachusetts regulars he, of course, had his cannon at his camp, on Morris Heights, from whence a couple of field pieces were brought to bear on the enemy, which fairly put them to flight, with two discharges only. George Clinton.—Jay, 54.

The British had a noble train of artillery. When they moved up the road and down the hill, as the letter of Mr. Jones says, nothing would be easier than to take cannon with them along the main road to the Point of Rocks, and then by the new

road, the continuation of the Harlem Lane, up to 131st and 133d street and 11th avenue, to the attack on Green's advanced guard, or they might as easily go by the road along the brow of Vanderwater's Heights, distinctly laid down on the true Sauthier Map, as the route of the *Hessian Column* substantially along 11th avenue across the Manhattanville Holloway to 133d street. This ought to relieve the doubts of Mr. Stevens about the artillery and how it got into the fight. That it was in the fight effectively, is free from doubt. General Clinton and Colonel Silliman so state specifically, and Sir Wm. Howe in general orders *desires to return thanks to the battalion* (of infantry) *and the officers and men of the artillery;* and the finding the relics by Mr. Deering at this place, and by Colonel Long at 155th street, show the presence of both those arms of the service in these two principal attacks. I am also informed by Mr. Hawley, whose letter is given in note I, and who has long resided at Carmansville; that up to the last year, 1879, the course and the remains of an old revolutionary road were plainly visible, leaving the Kingsbridge Road at about 164th street, and by a crooked and irregular course descending westwardly to the river at about the Audubon Park—a road which might well be used by Knowlton and the Rangers when they *set out* before day.

I have copied the epitaph of Captain Brown on page 53, to vindicate the character of that gallant officer, and also as additional evidence that this battle was known historically as the battle of Harlem Heights all along through the years of our revolutionary history. To it may be added that Paulding, one of the captors of Andre, is said to have been made a prisoner at the battle of Harlem Heights.

The Magazine of American History for August, 1880, page 142, furnishes another piece of evidence as to the name and place of the battle. It says:

In the Newark news, published in the Pennsylvania Evening Post for October, 1776, is an account of the skirmish on Harlem Heights on the 16th September. When we turn to the Pennsylvania Evening Post we find the following:

We hear that the English troops attacked part of our army near

the Blue Ball last Monday about 4 o'clock in the afternoon; that the enemy was twice repulsed, and beat back near two miles. This is neither very specific nor very certain. It is hearsay. It is, however, evidence that the battle was on the upper part of Harlem Heights. The Blue Ball or Blue Bell was between Morris Heights and Fort Washington.

And this is still further evidence:

Louis McLaren, in an oration delivered before the artillery of Wilmington, Del., July 5, 1813, thus alludes to the heroic battles of the war of Independence: The exploits of our heroes are almost as numerous as the hills of our country, and eclipse all the victories of Greece and Rome; cast your eyes over the extent of our territory and proudly dwell on the splendor of your national feats, Bunker Hill and the Heights of Harlem, Saratoga and Trenton, Princeton and Monmouth, Stony Point and Yorktown are the proud monuments of your heroes' deeds, and your country's glory.—*Magazine of Am. History* for June, 1880, p. 457.

In his *Battles of the United States by sea and land*, Mr. Dawson called this battle *the Battle of Harlem Plains*. A few years later he corrected the error in his *Battle of Harlem Heights*, a paper read before this Society and published under that title. Other historians have also been glad, on new evidence, to correct their mistakes and set themselves right, rather than to leave it to others to do it for them. I shall not omit to say, on this opportunity, that Mrs. Lamb has shown the true spirit of the impartial historian in this matter. Assuming, originally from Mr. Stevens, that his view of this battle was the correct one, she wrote a paper presenting this passage of American history under that aspect, and with the name Harlem Plains, which was published with illustrations, and was extensively circulated. It was that paper which led to the conversation with her mentioned in my preface at the foot of page IV. When subsequent re-examination of the question on contemporaneous original evidence, some of which she sought with labor and expense in a neighboring State, as she has recently informed me, convinced her that she had been in error; she without any pride of opinion, adopted the truth of the newly discovered evidence, and incorporated it into her history as

the Battle of Harlem Heights, without any allusion to the mistaken accounts of herself or of others. It is, perhaps, not surprising that Mr. Stevens has looked with disfavor on her change of opinion.

Mr. Stevens says that Mrs. Lamb's *statement that at evening the armies occupied the same relative position as before the battle, their pickets within speaking distance of each other, across the Manhattanville valley, where they remained for upward of three weeks, is also erroneous!* Let us see :

General George Clinton says: *Since the above affair nothing material has happened. The enemy keep close to their lines. Our advanced parties continue at their former station; we are daily throwing up works to prevent the enemy advancing.*—Jay, 52-3. Graydon says: *I was on guard at the Point of Rocks. This was our most advanced picket towards New York, and only separated from that of the enemy by a valley of a few hundred yards over.*—Jay, 75. *Our advanced sentries are within 300 yards of each other.*—General McDougall.

Colonel Reed says: *I assisted in calling off our troops when they had pursued the enemy as far as was thought proper.*—Jay, 49.

These troops charged the enemy with great intrepidity and drove them from the wood into the plain, and were pushing them from thence, having silenced their fire in a great measure, when I judged it prudent to order a retreat, fearing the enemy, as I have since found was really the case, were sending a large body to support their party. Washington to President of Congress (Jay, 41), and to N. Y. Convention.—Jay, 45.

Our troops still pressed on and drove the enemy about a mile and a half, till the General ordered them to give over the pursuit, fearing the whole of the enemy's army would advance upon them. They retreated in very good order.—Reed, Jay, 48.

*A large column of the enemy's army being at that time discovered to be in motion * * * our party was ordered in.*—Clinton, Jay, 52. *We retired to our first ground.*—Clinton, Jay, 54. *His Excellency sent out and ordered a timely retreat to our advanced post, for he discovered, or concluded, the enemy would send*

a large reinforcement.—Green, Jay, 56. We were ordered to retreat.—Jay, 59 and 61.

The General fearing (as we afterwards found) that a large body was coming up to support them, sent me over to bring our men off. They gave a hurrah, and left the field in good order.—Tilghman.

And in addition to these brigades of Earl Percy there were close at hand the 8,000 or 10,000 fresh British regulars, whose approach over the hill caused Washington to call in our victorious troops. They lay there till about the 29th October, when General Green, in a letter from Fort Lee, informs General Washington that *the British troops which advanced upon Harlem Plains, and on the hill where the Monday action was, have drawn within their lines again.*—Force.

Let those who can, believe with Mr. Stevens, that Washington did not call in his troops, as he and all these officers assert that he did, but left them exposed below his farthest pickets, without a trench or a breastwork, or lines of fortifications to protect them! and that, up to the surrender of Fort Washington, the American army held all the ground between McGowan's Pass and the Point of Rocks, living in barracks under the guns of the noble train of British artillery, and under the guns of the strong British fortifications from that Pass to the river, thrown up the night after the battle (Jay, 55),—held and manned by Lieutenant-General Earl Percy and his English and German brigades, who did not move till the 16th November.

I must here advert to some singular slips of the pen, if such they be.

Mr. Jay says, page 22: *Passing over the ridge which we have described as the Bloomingdale Heights, then known as Vandewater's Heights (they are so described in Sir William Howe's dispatch).*

Instead of describing the Bloomingdale Heights as the Vandewater Heights, Sir William Howe, whose army lay on Bloomingdale Heights, says: *On the 16th, in the morning, a large party of the enemy having passed under cover of the woods near to the advanced posts of the army, by the way of Vandewater's Heights.* This surely is not describing Bloomingdale Heights as Vandewater's Heights, but quite the reverse. The

Hessian account, Jay, 81.—Stewart, Jay, 78.—Stedman, Jay, 80,—all concur in describing Vandewater's Heights as in or near *the woods on the left of Bloomingdale Heights—left wing—left flank* of the British army. It ought to be remarked also, here, that while Knowlton's approach was incontestably on the left wing or flank of the British advanced post, all these various and inconsistent averments place the approach on the British right.

Another and more important, and quite as inexcusable error is found in the next succeeding paragraph, page 23, where it is stated, and said to be on the authority of General Reed's express statement, that the American advanced guard was picketed on the plain below the Point of Rocks, before the morning skirmish of Knowlton. If true, it would be a most important piece of testimony; but, in fact, Colonel Reed says no such thing.

I bring together Mr. Jay's statement and Colonel Reed's, for comparison.

Mr. Jay says: *Adjutant-General Joseph Reed, as he himself informed us, WAS SENT TO THE FRONT TO LEARN THE TRUTH, and went DOWN TO THE MOST ADVANCED GUARD PICKETED ON THE PLAIN BELOW THE POINT OF ROCKS. He here fell in with the party of Knowlton, who HAD BEEN DRIVEN FROM THE HILL, and while Reed was talking to the officer in command, the enemy showed themselves and opened fire at a distance of fifty yards. The Americans behaved well; stood and returned the fire till, overpowered by numbers (ten to one is Reed's estimate), they retreated, the enemy advancing with such rapidity that they were in possession of THE HOUSE IN WHICH REED CONVERSED WITH THE OFFICER, five minutes after he left it.*

Colonel Reed says: *An account came that the enemy were advancing upon us in three large columns. We have so many false reports that I desired the General to permit me to go and discover what truth there was in the account.—Jay, 47. I accordingly went down to our most advanced guard and fell in with the above party.—Jay, 49. While I was talking with the officer, the enemy advanced and the firing began at about 50 yards distance; as they were ten to one against our party, we immediately retreated.—Jay, 49. The enemy advanced upon us very fast. I had not*

quitted a house five minutes before they were in possession of it.—Jay, 48.

Not one word about being picketed on the plains below the Point of Rocks. All the words in small capitals have been interpolated into Reed's statement more than 100 years after it was written by Reed in a letter to his wife. Mr. Jay's oration was printed under the direction of Mr. Stevens, and I do not attribute these interpolations to Mr. Jay.

NOTE V.

Colonel Humphrey gives the following account of the flank attack:

Lieutenant Colonel Knowlton's Rangers (a fine selection from the Eastern regiments), who had been skirmishing with an advanced party, came in and informed the General that a body of British were under cover of a small eminence at no considerable distance. His Excellency, willing to raise our men from their dejection by the splendor of some little success, ordered Lieutenant-Colonel Knowlton with his rangers, and Major Leitch with three companies of Weedon's regiment of Virginians, to gain their rear while appearances should be made of an attack in front; as soon as the enemy saw the party sent to decoy them, they ran precipitately down the hill, took possession of some fences and bushes and commenced a brisk firing at long shot. Unfortunately, Knowlton and Leitch made their onset rather in flank than in rear. The enemy charged their front, and the skirmish at once became close and warm. Major Leitch received three balls through his side, and was borne from the field, and Colonel Knowlton was mortally wounded immediately after.—Life of Putnam, 140.

General Washington thus describes the same flank attack.

*Some of the enemy's light troops had advanced to the extremity of the high ground opposite to our present encampment * * Colonel Knowlton and Major Leitch were detached with parties of riflemen and rangers to get in their rear, while a disposition was made to attack them in front. By some unhappy mistake the fire was commenced from that quarter rather on their flank than in their rear.*

Washington to Patrick Henry, dated Headquarters, Heights of Harlem, October 5th, 1776, and his letter to the President of Congress, September 18th, also from headquarters,—Jay, 41 ; and Chief Justice Marshall gives the same account, which he received from the Virginia officers commanding the companies that were engaged.—Jay, 72.

The earliest map of the field is the pen and ink sketch to which reference has been made, of which a copy is given.—Jay, 68. That sketch represents that action to have begun near the Hudson river, between Washington's Headquarters and the high ground on the river-bank, directly opposite to an encampment, about one-third of a mile from headquarters south-westerly. Mr. Stevens says this sketch is not such a drawing as an engineer like Clinton would send to a public body. But General Clinton was not an engineer. The sketch is indeed rude, but perhaps all the more significant and important, because it was evidently a fresh off-hand draught made with no other purpose than to show, in a prominent and striking manner, the locality and course of the battle of the day and afternoon after the flank attack. I shall only put a double mark of wonder after the assertion of Mr. S., that this sketch represents Washington as standing during the action at the Point of Rocks !! when in fact it places him on Morris Heights, a little below the 10th mile stone, and nearly two miles north of the latitude of Harlem village and the Point of Rocks. It shows the flank attack and the second attack, 150 yards further down, and the actual buckwheat field still further down, in which *an action ensued for 1½ hour, when the enemy fled*, or in the blunter language of Captain Gooch, *broke and ran*, and took momentary refuge in an orchard below the Point of Rocks, whence, hurry-scurry, they made for their camps, just as our troops were called in.

The sudden and lamented death of my uncle, the author of the foregoing pages, left this appendix incomplete. He visited the rooms of the Historical Society, in reference to it, on the day before the fatal attack of the disease which ended his life. After his death a few memoranda were found, which he

had apparently made in the preparation of Note V, and which have been put in print as they were left. Their incompleteness is the more to be regretted, because the author, as will be seen by the close of his preface, invited special attention to this Note V.

I venture to add one single suggestion of my own to what he has written.

The affair of September 16th, 1776, began with an engagement about ten in the morning, between a small party of Americans, and a larger party of British troops. It ended about three o'clock in the afternoon, with the withdrawal of the American forces, each party occupying substantially the same ground as before.

Between ten and three, the British troops having advanced about a mile and a half, were driven back by the Americans over two miles.

Now it is entirely in accord with human nature that each party should bring into prominence that part of the day in which it was successful. The British would speak of the first skirmish and the final withdrawal, while to the Americans the main feature of the day would be, that they drove back the British, after their advance.

And so we find both Lord Howe and Captain Hall mentioning the retiring of the Americans (*obliged them to retire*, says Howe; *The latter obliged to retire*, says Hall), as the main feature of the day; while Washington and Clinton and Silliman, and in fact all the American authorities dwell on the fact that the British were driven back. (*These troops charged the enemy with great intrepidity, and drove them from the wood into the plain, and were pushing them from thence.*—Washington. *A very brisk action commenced, which continued for near two hours, in which time we drove the enemy.*—Clinton. *About two hours—in which time our people drove the regulars back from post to post about a mile and a half.*—Silliman. *Drove them back, pursued and forced them to retire.*—Fish. *Drove the dogs near three miles.*—Brown.)

It is equally in accord with human experience, that each party, bringing into prominence its own success, should connect with it the name of the place where that success was

achieved. It was therefore to be expected that Lord Howe and Captain Hall, who mention the British success, should mention Vandewater's Heights as the scene of it, which it was.

It would be equally natural that every one on the American side, who spoke of the American success, should have given it the name of the Battle of Haarlem Heights, if that was the place where the American success was achieved. And the fact that it did bear that name for three-quarters of a century is very strong evidence that Haarlem Heights was the place of the American success.

Mr. Stevens brings forward Captain Hall's map as *conclusive evidence* against the views of the author of this pamphlet.

For one, I fail to see how the fact that Captain Hall, a British officer, marks Vandewater's Heights on his map as the place of what he calls the *Skirmish on Vandewater's Heights, between the Light Infantry, the 42d Regiment, Hessian Company of Chasseurs, and the Rebels, the latter obliged to retire within their works with loss*, is any authority on the question, whether the success, of which the Americans speak, was gained on Haarlem Heights or Haarlem Plains.

ROBT D. BENEDICT.

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